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AMAZING STORIES

Science Fiction

Vol. 9

NOVEMBER, 1934

No. 7

CONTENTS

Editorial

- The Sphere of Vapor.....*T. O'Connor Sloane, Ph.D.* 10

Serials

- Land of Twilight (Part I).....*Robert Page Preston* 73
Through the Andes (Conclusion).....*A. Hyatt Verrill* 97

Stories Complete in This Issue

- The Moon Waits.....*H. L. G. Sullivan* 14
Nækken of Norway.....*Bob Olsen* 61
The First Flight.....*Joe W. Skidmore* 92

- Science Questionnaire..... 96

- In the Realm of Books.....*C. A. Brandt* 133

- Discussions..... 135

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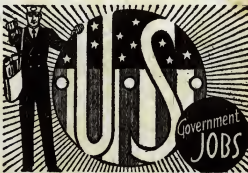
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148x4-40-81	14.25	3.45
150x4-40-81	14.45	3.50
152x4-40-81	14.65	3.55
154x4-40-81	14.85	3.60
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164x4-40-81	15.85	3.85
166x4-40-81	16.05	3.90
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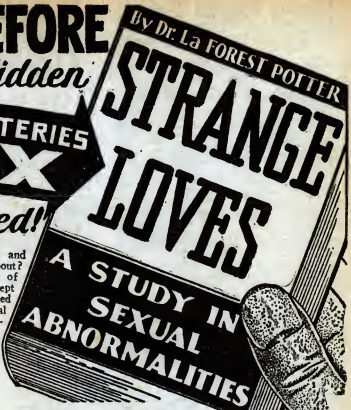
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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T. O'CONOR SLOANE, Ph.D., *Editor*
Editorial and General Offices: 461 Eighth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Extravagant Fiction Today Cold Fact Tomorrow

The Sphere of Vapor

By T. O'CONOR SLOANE, Ph.D.

THE above title is the literal meaning of the word atmosphere. It is derived from the Greek.

The true intellectual life may be taken as principally developed in the direction of learning what things are and why they have their existence. This is simple enough, but it is not realized by all of us. The word "science" is derived from the Latin verb *scire*, to know. And it is only when a great deal of any subject is known that the possessor of that knowledge is a scientist, he is one who knows. If a thing is susceptible of being known it must inevitably be true. This gives us a definition of the type of story that your magazine is devoted to, it is science-fiction, a mixture of truth and romance. But while ingenious writers with the story-telling faculty can do the romance part without end, mankind, which has been acquiring knowledge for thousands of years, knows hardly anything of what is about us—

there is so much to know and so little chance of acquiring more than fragmentary knowledge of the world we live in.

Air is a very common, even ordinary thing. Man breathes it, lives by it, dies if deprived of it. Over a hundred years ago it was analyzed more or less accurately, and was said to be a mixture of two gasses, oxygen and nitrogen. This was accepted as its essential composition. In an atmosphere of nitrogen an animal would die, oxygen had to be supplied or it would live but a few minutes. And the two gases are only mixed. Then the idea of chemical combination was formulated and if the innocent nitrogen and the essential oxygen were chemically combined the result would be one of various utterly poisonous gases, some highly corrosive and some forming acids, when water was present, which acids were deadly for the human system. Because the two

gases were simply mixed they formed the maintainer of human life. It was but a step from the essential to the destructive and fatal.

The old philosophers established a theory of the elemental constituents of the world. They affirmed that there were four elements, earth, water, air and fire. We moderns, who still have a lot to learn, would give them other names, which would be solid, liquid, gas and heat. The latter in many cases would convert a solid into a liquid and the same liquid into a gas. There was a great deal of good sense in the wisdom of twenty or more centuries ago.

The air which we breathe is our atmosphere, and after further investigations it was found to contain carbon dioxide in small amount. When man inhales air he burns as truly as does a wood fire. Oxygen of the air combines with the blood in his veins and the oxydized blood is pumped by the heart into the arteries and in its travel through the system parts with its oxygen and becomes veinous blood again. The heart, which is a pump, draws the blood from the veins and forces it through the arteries and does this for our life time, the three score and ten years or more or less of life, without a single break in its operation.

Then we eat food and this is consumed or burned up by the human system, the oxygen for its combustion coming from the mixture we call the atmosphere. We inhale the gases of the atmosphere just as a furnace takes in air below its grate. We exhale the air, or what is left of it after we use up some of its oxygen to burn our food, and to supply the blood with some of its oxygen. The gas we exhale has not only been robbed of a quantity of oxygen, but has had carbon dioxide gas added to it. If a man were immersed in a chamber filled with carbon dioxide

gas he would be drowned almost as truly as if the chamber were full of water. He would probably be poisoned. Wherever we go the atmosphere contains a small amount of carbon dioxide.

Carbon is usually a black solid, lamp-black, anthracite coal, plumbago used for stove polish, represent it approximately. Of course the diamond we know to be carbon also. Now let a chemist try to get the carbon out of carbon dioxide. It is perfectly simple to reduce carbon dioxide to carbon monoxide, taking one half of the oxygen out of it, or what is the same thing adding carbon to it. To take the oxygen out of carbon monoxide requires powerful chemical action.

Carbon dioxide is a true constituent of our atmosphere and as animal life is sustained by oxygen, plant life is partly sustained by carbon dioxide. The thin, fragile leaf, that is stirred by the gentlest breeze, does the work that taxes the power of the chemist—it decomposes carbon dioxide completely and uses the carbon for its own tissue. It does not use the oxygen, but sets it free. If some fresh leaves of any plant or tree are put into a test tube, which is filled with water, not the least bubble of air being within it, and which is inverted in a glass of water and exposed to the sun, oxygen gas will gradually accumulate in the upper end of the tube. The leaves exhale oxygen, as animals exhale carbon dioxide.

Pure air contains about three-ten thousandths of its volume of carbon dioxide. The animal has to keep up his temperature and exert energy and has to burn up his fuel supply, which is his food, in order to be at a temperature of about 98° Fahrenheit. He inhales air which is expended in maintaining the life and power of the body, by oxydizing the organic matter introduced into the system in the shape of food.

The engine of the automobile draws in air which in the carburetter is mixed with a combustible substance, gasoline, a chemical combination of hydrogen and carbon. This is burned in the cylinders of the engine and drives the car. In our bodies the air does a parallel service burning our food and supplying us with energy. The food represents the gasoline in the above analogy and the oxygen of the air in both cases supplies the necessary constituent for combustion. The nitrogen of the air is without any action except as a diluting agent, like water in beverages.

There is a small amount of carbon dioxide in the air, but plants live not only by their leaf action, but by assimilation from the soil by their roots.

The French have used open braziers for burning charcoal to supply warmth in their rooms. These are open fires and liberate a quantity of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. The latter is harmless or nearly so if inhaled except perhaps for a slight poisoning effect and by its dilution of the vital oxygen. But carbon monoxide is a deadly poison if inhaled. A room in which a charcoal open fire is used imperatively needs ventilation. Suicides have been due to these open charcoal fires.

The automobile engine has been aluded to. It is a triumph in convenience, a failure in engineering. The explosive combustion of the mixture of gasoline and oxygen of the air is produced in water refrigerated cylinders, so that only a fraction of the energy of the explosion is utilized to drive the car. A great part is absorbed by the water or air devoted to cooling the cylinders. But the cooling has another effect. Perfect combustion of gasoline would give as its products water and carbon dioxide. These would be accompanied by the nitrogen of the air as a simple diluent. But the combustion is imperfect, from

the cause referred to above, the cooling of the cylinders, and one of the products is carbon monoxide. This is a deadly gas, which already has had several victims in garages, when the engines of cars were kept running with the doors of the garage shut, or with inadequate ventilation. It is odorless, tasteless, invisible. The carbon dioxide, an innocuous constituent of the atmosphere, could, by removal of one-half of its oxygen by simple chemical process, be converted into this active poison. A saving clause is that there is very little carbon dioxide in the air. It may be called a very minor diluter of the atmosphere, but it has potentialities at least in theory. But there is no saving clause for the exhaust of the automobile engine of the present day—the mixture of gases contains the deadly carbon monoxide.

Other possibilities of poisonous gases are in the air. If one atom of oxygen is combined with two atoms of nitrogen the product is nitrous oxide, "laughing gas" in popular terminology, an anesthetic agent used to produce insensibility to pain and insensibility in minor surgical operations. Many experimenters have played with this gas, and it is usually innocuous, nevertheless, all competent dentists and surgeons administer it with the greatest care. Yet it is a comparatively innocent gas compared with other compounds of nitrogen and oxygen. These compounds, four in number, are absolutely imbreathable, and definitely fatal if taken into the lungs; some are dark brown gases, one of them containing the highest percentage of oxygen, forms nitric acid when added to water, and the liquid is a strong poison.

If nitrogen is combined with carbon it will give cyanogen, a basis for one of the deadliest poisons known to man.

All this is enough to make us afraid of our vital gas, the atmosphere.

The comfort in view of what innocent

nitrogen can do is afforded by the fact that it is a difficult element to force into any combination. Its natural impulse is to live alone.

All this may seem quite alarming but there are saving clauses. To make nitrogen, the most innocent of the elements, dangerous it has to be chemically combined with some other element, and it is a very difficult element to combine with another. Nature in her own way has brought about such combinations, and the chemical and technical manufacture of nitrogen compounds from the nitrogen of the air has taxed the genius of the world's chemists. It is no simple and easy thing to produce nitrogen compounds from the atmosphere. We are thoroughly protected from the standpoint of the danger of nitrogen compounds.

In South America there are vast deposits of sodium nitrate, and these represent the natural combination of nitrogen and oxygen. Chili nitrate, as it is called, is worked on a large scale and shiploads of it are sent all over the world. One of the great uses of nitrogen compounds is to make explosive, for use in war. It is for this supply as well as for fertilizers that the great fixation plants are operated to obtain nitrogen compounds with the nitrogen of the air. It is estimated that it costs \$25,000 to kill one man in war.

A good part of this is expended in combining nitrogen of the air with hydrogen or oxygen.

For many years a process for making "nitrogen" from the air was used by chemists, at least they supposed they were making it. Air was purified by passing it over an alkali or alkaline earth, which removed the carbon dioxide, and then it was passed through a tube containing more or less finely divided oxidizable metal, it might be copper, which was heated to a strong red heat.

This combined with the oxygen and four fifths approximately of the volume of the air was collected as nitrogen. There were other ways of making nitrogen from chemical salts. Then there arose a puzzle. The nitrogen made from the air was of a different specific gravity than that of the gas produced from chemicals. On investigation it was found that the air contained an unknown and long unsuspected gas. This was separated and examined. It was named argon and is interesting as it was the first of the uncombinable gases; it will not enter into combination with any other element. So we are breathing argon, nitrogen and carbon dioxide gas at every inspiration. We use a part only of the oxygen and the exhalations add to or exceed the carbon dioxide which was inhaled. The last is the product of combustion or burning, which is going on in our body as long as we live.

The discovery of argon was made in 1894 by Rayleigh and Ramsey. But it was only the beginning of things. Faraday did the earliest work on the liquefaction of gases. Carbon dioxide was easily liquefied. Chlorine also was liquefiable. A visitor in Faraday's laboratory called his attention to some "oil," as he called it, in his apparatus. Faraday took the reproof, but, if he was capable of such a thing, he must have chuckled when he wrote the next day to his critic, telling him that what he thought was "oil" was liquid chlorine. But there were gases that the scientists of those days could not liquefy and these were called permanent gases, and the principal gases of the atmosphere, oxygen and nitrogen, were called permanent gases. But at last they too yielded and were liquefied and eventually every gas was liquefied or made into a liquid. It may have been in almost minute quantities in some cases.

The Moon Waits

By H. L. G. SULLIVAN

We have had a number of stories of interplanetary travel, but here we have one in which the moon plays its part—where the inhabitants are depicted as centuries in advance of the denizens of earth, who treat such things, as a great battle where thousands of people perish, as the achievements of heroes.

CHAPTER I

“AND that,” Dr. Carvel Diehl concluded, “ends the notes on my observations.”

A sigh, as of breath long held and released after great tension, escaped all but one of the five members of the amateur astronomical group, known as The Sky-Peepers, where they crowded in a knot near the speaker.

The men had strained forward. Now they relaxed. One man, of powerful physique, with deeply set gray eyes, rose and addressed the little gathering.

“I have seen the same thing Doc has,” Thaddeus Champion, the bluff mayor of Championville and the son of its founder, reported. “I’ve seen things I can’t interpret otherwise than as indicating movement on the Moon.

“Maybe it’s an active volcano. Or, as Doc says, if we are willing to go all the way back to Kepler and call modern theory a cockeyed—er—prevaricator, then we can say we’ve seen people up there.

“It’s a wild shot in the dark,” cautioned the astonishingly firm voice of old Mr. Ferguson. “Pop” Ferguson, the father of the local jeweler, was the founder of The Sky-Peepers, a white-haired septuagenarian who read much and said little. All day he bent over his bench in his cluttered workshop at the back of the

jewelry store, grinding lenses to the exacting nicety of perfection. By night, his lenses, fitted to telescopes of his own construction, studied the heavens from the elevation of Needles Mountain, which towered like a sentinel over Championville and the neighboring county seat, Brooker.

“Wild,” agreed Professor Lemmon, of Brooker University, in a hushed tone, “but what a shot it is! Life on a planet known to have died when our earth was in its swaddling clothes! Life where no atmosphere exists to sustain life! People trying to exterminate each other where science has proved there is neither endurable warmth nor supportable cold; on a planet heated by scorching, unbroken sun-rays to unbearable torridity on the one side, and frozen in an unrelenting blanket of cold on the other. But there is a possible qualification, gentlemen. Science says the Moon could support no life as we know it.”

This was the thought which had held the group of independent observers breathless when Carvel Diehl, the Championville general practitioner, had exploded his incredible, untenable and fascinating theory.

If the Moon, contrary to all accepted astronomical findings, did, indeed, support life, then that life must be subject to no laws of life, as the science of physiology knows life on earth.



The figure, however, kept moving. Other figures like it, swathed and hooded and not unlike deep sea divers in uniform, moved into the picture from the left.

A PEOPLE able to breathe where no kind cloak of gas and moisture provided an atmosphere, must be a people devoid of lung structure. A people fitted to endure continuous blasting heat unrelieved by tempering humidity or to sustain life in constant darkness and bitter, below-freezing cold must be made not of flesh but of metal.

"What do you say, Kurokin?" Thaddeus Champion leaned forward to ask a dwarfish, silent man, who had remained in the background, giving no indication of shock or surprise when Dr. Diehl advanced his revolutionary conjecture.

The other Sky-Peepers looked at Kurokin expectantly.

Kurokin turned a huge face, grotesque of feature but of obvious intelligence, toward his fellow members.

"I thing-k," he intoned with obvious effort, and with an un-American accent difficult to place, "it is mos-st wise that we haf no members among us who talk outside our little meeting-g. I thing-k it is wise that we haf neffer invite the press-s to our gather-togethers. Other-wise—"

"That's right, too," Thaddeus Champion interrupted. "Let the boys up at the government observatory talk, if they see what we've seen. They must have spotted it. They're keeping quiet. Why?"

"Because," Dr. Carvel Diehl answered, "they're like us. They know people are on edge, and they are afraid of a wholesale snap of nerves if they go off half-cocked and announce a discovery refuting all scientific knowledge, especially if it concerns a celestial body as relatively near us as the Moon.

"A yarn like that in the papers would convince a lot of people that the world was coming to an end. There would be fanatical demonstrations of all kinds; suicides; a world-wide panic.

"Just think what the tabloids and the Sunday supplements could do with a gov-

ernment-sponsored statement that there were people on the Moon, more than probably hostile, with something that looks very like giant guns pointed toward the earth!"

"In this town right now the man who spread that report, any one of us, for instance, would find himself hauled before the Brooker Insanity Commission," Professor Lemmon declared.

"And that's no idle joke, either," Thaddeus Champion corroborated. "Look what happened to the Gremillion boy at the Kent trial! His ravings sounded crazy, all right, but no crazier than this."

A tap on the door came like a crisp period to the observation.

"Who's that?" someone asked, in a whisper.

Professor Lemmon went to the door, opened it a cautious crack, and came back.

"IT'S your daughter, Mr. Champion, and she has Dolman of the *Enterprise* with her."

Champion rose.

"I'll have to find out what they want," he grumbled. "But—"

He laid a finger across his lips. The Sky-peepers nodded. Dr. Diehl lifted his right hand, as if being sworn to secrecy. Champion opened the door.

Erika, his nineteen-year-old daughter, stepped inside, followed by the easy-gaited news emissary of the morning paper, True Dolman.

"As a special favor to me, Mr. Champion, pardon this intrusion," Dolman apologized. "The woman tempted me. I know these Sky-peeper meetings are far from public affairs, and are not sufficiently official to warrant bursting in on you like this."

"True has been trying all day to find Mr. Kurokin," Erika explained. "He stopped in at the house a minute, and I told him that, after all, this isn't exactly a secret lodge, and that since Mr. Kuro-

kin is a member and would likely he here, we might as well come over and find out."

She paused, suddenly, sensing the tension.

"But I am afraid we shouldn't have intruded," she finished, uncertainly.

Kurokin gestured reassuringly. He had come forward, his short legs carrying with difficulty his large torso topped by his enormous head, and now he greeted the young people with a ceremonious bow.

"Are you also interested in astronomy, Mr. Dolman?" he asked, softly.

True Dolman smiled down at the dwarf.

"Not much," he disclaimed. "I've ground a few lenses. I didn't have much luck."

"This is a freak community for this sort of thing, Kurokin," the mayor intervened. "Except for Pop, here, grinding telescope lenses and putting them in telescopes he has made, and then letting a few of his friends in on the fun, we would never have thought of astronomy as a hobby. Naturally, watching us, a good many of the younger crowd have taken an occasional flyer at it. Outside of Championville, though, you won't find much of that sort of thing going on."

Throughout this interruption Kurokin had searched the newspaperman's face with a steady scrutiny.

"You wished to speak to me?" he asked.

"It's rather urgent," Dolman answered.

"I am at your service, my friend. Will you accompany me for a short walk? Miss Champion-n will excuse us?"

Erika gave them a pleased little nod, like a child who has been tactless and been forgiven.

"All the same, Mr. Champion, please accept our apologies for this intrusion," Dolman said, from the doorway. "I'll be

back as soon as I can make it, and take Ricky home." He followed Kurokin into the darkness.

"We go to my home for a little?" Kurokin asked, a few steps down the street. His muscular, short arm, terminating in a ludicrously large hand, motioned to a batten door off the main entrance of a second rate restaurant.

"That suits me, Mr. Kurokin," Dolman replied. "I've a question or so to ask you before I have to report back at the office."

"I precede you," Kurokin said, courteously. "The stair-r is dar-rk."

"I've a flashlight," the newspaperman offered, handing it to the dwarf.

"Kro-tenn!"

"Eh?"

"Par-rdon. I mean-n to say, thank you, my friendt."

"Oh." Dolman's tone was dry. "You know, Mr. Kurokin, you've an odd walk."

Kurokin paused and turned at the top landing.

"I findt it an effortt," he said, lighting his heavy features with the flash, "to pull my feedt from the groundt at all. The effortt has developed my leg muscles. Feel."

He gravely extended a stunted leg.

A little embarrassed, Dolman stooped.

"Why, they're like an acrobat's," he ejaculated. "Are you a performer?"

Kurokin moved his head, not in the usual negative motion, but with an odd rocking motion of the entire upper portion of his body.

"Come in, my friendt," he said.

DOLMAN stopped on the threshold, startled. Instead of the cracked white plaster walls he had expected to see in the cheap rooms making up the top story lodgings in this block of restaurants, cleaning shops and fruit stands, the light Kurokin carried flashed on,

revealed, lustrous walls of a radiant, greenish blue.

Against this effective background black panels were set, elaborately decorated. A hasty glance gave Dolman the impression of tapestry done in thread of the brilliance of chromium, depicting oddly shaped figures who might have stepped out of a diving sequence in a motion picture, some of them getting in and out of odd-looking vehicles, shaped like neither automobiles nor boats. Seeing the reporter's interested astonishment, Kurokin turned a switch and invited the newspaperman to enter.

Dolman counted seven panels along each wall, and one large one across the front of the long room. The front windows had been blocked and covered by this end panel. The only light came from a globe of glowing metal in the center of the ceiling.

"Imagine anything like this in Champville!" Dolman exclaimed, curiously. "How did you bring such decorations into this town without setting all the tongues wagging from here to the county seat?"

Kurokin's head rocked from side to side with the strange, swaying motion Dolman had noticed on the stairs.

"I didt nodt bring them; I made them," he answered, briefly. "Sidt down-n, pleas-s."

The dwarf pushed forward a seven-sided tabouret of black and silver metal. Its seven legs glided along the bare and polished floor. At his gesture, Dolman sat down. Kurokin seated himself on a similar backless stool and leaned forward, his expressionless black eyes on the reporter's blue ones.

"Now my friend, you were looking for me?"

"You've made yourself hard to find, Mr. Kurokin," Dolman said, a little grimly. "I saw you come in here several hours ago. I knocked, and someone called

downstairs and said you were out. That's your privilege, of course, but I have a legitimate reason, connected with inquiries that have arrived at the 'Enterprise' office, for trying to get hold of you. Also, I've a reason of my own."

"Than-nk you."

"Don't mention it. First, there's this, and I think you really will thank me, because my paper is trying to do you a favor. At least, I am. And I hope you'll take this interview in the spirit in which it is offered.

"What country do you hail from, Mr. Kurokin?"

The smouldering eyes of the dwarf seemed to drop a veil over their blackness as the soft voice replied:

"It has serfed my purpose to be a little silent about thadt. May I ask why you wish to know?"

"TO be frank—and I'm not supposed to spill this, either—the commercial airport people suspect you of a little bit of everything, including the effort to get their Eastern route changed from the plateau to the valley. This isn't official, but, personally, I've a hunch they think you're a spy for some bigger concern out for their mail-carrying contract."

The dwarf listened courteously, but made no comment.

"If your passport is o. k., of course, they can't touch you. If it's not, and they get the immigration authorities on your trail, they'll get you deported. Most of the quotas were filled up long ago."

"Passpordts!" Kurokin's heavy face cracked in a grotesque, wide smile. "You are mosdt kindt to tell me this-s, my friendt. Why?"

"Sure, I've my reasons," True Dolman admitted. "I've made no advance bargain, because I've a feeling that no matter what the airport people may think, you're probably a square shooter. I've tipped you off, and I want fair exchange.

What were you doing at the Brooker insane asylum yesterday?"

"Pardon-n. But, once more, why do you ask?"

"Because I'm very much interested in two things, Mr. Kurokin. One is your personal appearance. You'll forgive my rudeness, but you are, without exception, the most extraordinary-looking person I've ever seen."

Without offense, the dwarf nodded.

"Andt the other?"

"The only time I have ever seen a face and figure even remotely resembling yours was in a drawing. The drawing was made by a student who attended Brooker University at the same time I did. That student, a young man named Gremillion, is now a patient, by force of law, at Brooker insane asylum. I ask why you went there, because, in addition to having known Gremillion at school, I covered, as a newspaper reporter, the trial at which he was found insane in connection with the death of his friend and partner, Mason Kent. I have been sure for a good while, Mr. Kurokin, that the trial, and Gremillion's committance to the violent ward of an insane asylum was a miscarriage of justice.

"In the hope that you may be working for Gremillion's release, or may know something about the truth concerning the disappearance of Kent, whose body could not be produced by the prosecution, I have done what I could, to keep the airport people cooled down. So far they have not called the attention of the immigration authorities to your presence here. Also, I've tipped you off in time to clear out, in case there is anything irregular.

"So I repeat my question. What was your errand at the asylum yesterday?"

Kurokin wagged his massive head.

"Studying your r-remarkable methods-s of justice," he replied, bitterly. "I called to see your friendt Gremillion, as you haf guessedt."

"I had a hunch you did," Dolman exclaimed. "How was he? Did they let you talk to him?"

"They didt."

"Would you say he's insane, or not?"

"I hadt nefer seen him before."

"Gosh!" Dolman's disappointment robbed his voice of its excited interest. "Then you wouldn't have had much to judge by."

"Oh, yes-s, I could judge. Garth Gremillion, in his cell, my friendt, is far saner than mos-st people, outside, including those who sendt him there. I hadt nefer seen him, but he recognizedit me at once."

"Recognized you? How could he?"

THE dwarf's great head swayed, and with it the entire upper half of his body.

"He, too, mentionedit a drawing he hadt made long ago, in school. A drawing with redt crayon on blue paper, he saidt."

"That's right!" True Dolman corroborated, eagerly.

"And he saidt, to his keeper, 'Look, Jake, this is how you vill look if you lif fifteen or twentdy thousandt years longer.' Jake hurriedt away, andt Gremillion-n saidt to me in a whisper-r, 'Tell me quick, while the keeper's gone for the doctor. Is Mason-n Kent all right? How didt you leave him? When is he comin-ng back?'"

The reporter had leaped to his feet.

"Kent? Did he say Mason Kent?" he shouted. "That's the man Gremillion was accused of murdering!"

The dwarf silently enjoyed the reporter's excitement. Dolman paced the floor nervously.

"That's one murder trial I'll never forget," he said. "You say the boy is sane. All right. But we've got a fat chance to get him out of the asylum without turning him over to the authorities, unless we

can first produce Mason Kent! I suppose you know that the wild conversation Gremillion spilled during the trial was all that saved him from the death penalty?"

The dwarf swayed in negation.

"Gremillion-n is innocent," he said.

"Fair enough! How do you know?"

"Because the man-n he was triedt two years-s ago for blowing to atoms still lived not six month since. He lives-s yedt, I hope."

"Then why the devil didn't he turn up at the trial? What does he mean by leaving poor Gremillion in a lunatic cell? Two years! Even if we had him here we'd have our work cut out for us trying to get a new trial and acquittal."

Kurokin's face remained impassive. His black eyes, alone, betrayed his surprise.

Surely he will be freed if the school-madde he is charged with destroying returns alive?"

"I wouldn't bet on it," said the newspaperman. "Garth Gremillion has a regrettable sense of humor and a peculiarly persistent lack of judgment about when to use it. At the trial, his lawyer, a man the court called in to defend him, put him on the stand.

"He asked questions tending to show that disappearance doesn't necessarily imply murder. He asked Gremillion where he believed Kent had gone, and when he'd be back. The blamed fool sat there with a one-sided grin on his map and said Kent had gone to the Moon!"

The dwarf's impassive eyes regarded the reporter without blinking. Dolman shrugged.

"Naturally, the prosecutor called heaven, the court and the jury to witness the heartless brute who could blow his friend and benefactor to pieces and then sit and joke about it. From then on they had trouble keeping Gremillion protected from mobs that tried to lynch him.

"FINALLY his lawyer got some alienists here, and after things cooled down a little the community was ready to admit the alienists were right, and Gremillion must be mad. I thought, myself, that he was only doing a little ill-timed joking. But ill-timed or not, it put him in the asylum.

"Now what does he do? You call on him, hoping to help him, and he kids one of his keepers about your personal appearance, making a wisecrack good for a straitjacket on short notice even if he'd never been locked up before.

"I'm ready, and my paper stands back of me, to try to find Kent, bring him here and spring Gremillion. That is, if he'll let us. But if he is determined to keep on acting like a prize nut, what chance have we got?"

Kurokin was silent.

Something significant in his silence, charging the atmosphere, halted True Dolman in his restless pacing back and forth in front of the dwarf. Subconsciously he had paused near one of the panels. He whirled and faced it, looking from it to Kurokin and back to the panel again, studying the figures it depicted. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse.

"Say," he said, his throat muscles straining to eject the words, "Gremillion wasn't telling the truth about Mason Kent going to the Moon? Was he?"

CHAPTER II

IN the dimly lighted hall Erika Champion and the remaining Skypeepers awaited the return of Kurokin and Dolman.

"Kurokin's a queer fish," Jed Hoskins, the local blacksmith, said. "Maybe we should have found out more about him before being in such a hurry to take him in. Who is he, anyhow?"

"You will have to ask Dr. Diehl that

question," Thaddeus Champion answered. "You brought him in, eh, Doc?"

"Dr. Wilson, head of the weather bureau's observatory on Needles Mountain vouches for him," the doctor said, mildly. "He asked me as a personal favor to get Kurokin into our little group and help him pick up English. He felt that Kurokin would be a big help to us in our observations, and you won't deny he has."

"Remarkable brain," Professor Lemon, of the mathematics department at Brooker University, corroborated. "I doubt that we should have attained our present gratifying results except for his help."

"I don't quite like the way he marched young Dolman out of here," Thaddeus Champion said, uneasily. "I never did like a malformed runt, no matter how good a head's on his shoulders. I don't like mysteries, either. I think we ought to ask Wilson more about him."

Unexpectedly, Erika spoke.

"True says the people at the commercial airport want Mr. Kurokin deported as an undesirable alien," she said.

"They do? Why?"

"The weather bureau at Needles Observatory insisted on a new air route and gave the airport people some of Mr. Kurokin's computations as the reason. The officials don't like the idea. The valley route takes more time than the plateau route, and would leave an opening for some other flying company to bid on their contract. They think Mr. Kurokin is here working on the quiet for some big airplane syndicate that hopes to control all the passenger-mail routes."

"Dangerous talk," Champion growled.

"It's confidential," Erika explained.

"Knowing Mr. Kurokin is highly regarded, and that he belongs to the Sky-Peepers, True didn't want to undertake any investigation without letting you know."

"He needn't hesitate on my account," the mayor disclaimed, looking at his watch. "He can go right ahead. I shan't interfere if he wants to investigate the universe."

Steps sounded in the little hall and almost immediately the door opened. Several men entered led by Justin Holmes, owner of the *Championville Enterprise*, closely followed by Dr. Wilson of the government weather observatory, and Dolman, whose eyes were shining with excitement.

"Who is talking about the universe?" Dr. Wilson asked, his jocular tone feebly cloaking his agitation. "This news-hound here," he went on, maintaining his note of forced playfulness, "has come rounding me up, along with his boss, Colonel Holmes, and handed us a succession of pretty stiff shocks."

"We'll need to get our heads together. A situation has arisen which will require all our combined judgment, if we're to cope with it at all. We need to discuss a corner of the universe that is mighty important, to-night, to every one of us."

THIS speech, together with the obviously wrought-up condition of the ordinarily placid Colonel Holmes, Dr. Wilson and True Dolman brought the Sky-peepers to their feet in expectancy not untinged with alarm. Pop Ferguson motioned silently to Champion, and they began moving the benches forward in a group at the front of the hall. Erika, alone, had been deceived by the assumed jocularly in Dr. Wilson's tone. Frankly delighted, she dropped into a chair beside one into which True Dolman eased himself, his knees shaking. As his hand inadvertently touched hers she looked at him, startled. The hand was cold, and his forehead was damp with nervous perspiration.

Justin Holmes moved a chair into the center of a ring that had been formed by

the concerted effort of all to get within easy hearing distance. He beckoned to Thaddeus Champion.

"Is your daughter at all nervous?" he asked, in a low voice.

Erika heard.

"Please let me stay, Dad," she pleaded. "I'm all right."

"I've been Ricky's doctor since she cut her first tooth, Thad," Dr. Diehl intervened. "I can vouch for her nerves. Probably they're the steadiest set in Championville. Spill your news, Colonel."

The newspaper publisher looked at the mayor.

Thaddeus Champion nodded.

"Come in, Kurokin," Justin Holmes called.

The outside door opened, and the dwarf, swarthy in the dim light, entered, his short legs bearing him awkwardly to the vacant chair the publisher had placed beside his own. Justin Holmes rose.

"Gentlemen," he said, carefully, "I want to make a startling introduction.

"You all know Mr. Kurokin here, by sight. Some of you know him as a friend, some as an able fellow-scientist. He has told you nothing, I understand, of his history before coming to Championville where he has been welcomed as a neighbor, except that he has been, for many years, an astronomical observer.

"Gentlemen, up to six months ago, Mr. Kurokin was chief meteorologist for the Kro-del-tsar Krojek. That is the official title of the government astronomical observatory on the Moon."

A ripple of incredulity went around the little gathering. The publisher gestured for silence. He dropped a hand on the muscular shoulder of the dwarf.

"This is the first Moon man ever to arrive, alive and identified as such, on our planet."

There was a stunned silence.

Thaddeus Champion broke it finally

with a question that dominated the minds of all present.

"What is he here for?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"He has promised to tell us that before he leaves this hall to-night," Justin Holmes replied. "First, he demands a complete and chronological report of several events known, in part, at least, to several of us here.

"Gentlemen, without a doubt a gross injustice has been done by our state, our county and our courts in the instance of a young man tried for murder two years ago.

"That murder trial is not unconnected with Mr. Kurokin's presence on our planet and in our little city.

"As a publisher, I stand ready to do what I can to help right this wrong and to give any advice I can offer as the safest way to announce to the world the tremendous discovery I am told you men have made in pursuance of your astronomical observations.

"MR. KUROKIN has decided to reveal his identity because of your discoveries. To make any constructive use of those discoveries we will need his help.

"To merit that help, and to right the wrong our State and its Courts have brought down on the head of Garth Gremillion, now in the Brooker County Asylum for the Insane, we must lay squarely on the table what facts we have concerning Gremillion and the disappearance of Mason Kent, keeping in mind the bearing the fate of these two young men has on the presence of a Moon man on the earth at this time."

Thaddeus Champion rose.

"Conduct the proceedings as you see fit, Colonel," he invited. "We're all with you. That right, Pop?"

"Pop" Ferguson's keen old eyes surveyed Champion as they had been survey-

ing Justin Holmes and Kurokin turn and turn about.

"It seems I've started something with my lens-grinding that I'll probably never live to see finished," he said, whimsically. "But go ahead, Colonel. We're highly privileged to listen."

"Very well. We'll begin with two boys who matriculated at Brooker University. Five years ago, wasn't it, Professor Lemmon?"

"That is correct, Colonel."

"Garth Gremillion was half French, half Irish, an awkward, dreamy boy, too big for his age, with a brogue and with a belief in everything from ghosts and fairies to unexplored science. He lived with relatives on a farm between here and Brooker. The Marshall family, Dr. Diehl."

"I knew them. They were a no-account lot," the doctor grumbled. "They left the boy in the lurch when he needed them, and departed owing money right and left."

"Yes, I understood they had left the state," the publisher agreed. "We'll make it our business to turn them up, if we need them."

"At school, and, so far as that goes, in all America, Garth Gremillion had just one friend. Is that right, Dolman? You spent part of your school years in Brooker."

"Yes, sir. He wasn't popular."

"No. He is said to have had an unfortunate way of joking at things other people took seriously, and taking seriously things ridiculous to others. But he had one friend, in spite of that."

"This was a boy from upstate who went to college with Gremillion and roomed with him at the Marshall farmhouse. His name was Mason Kent. A genius, gentlemen. I realize that word is one rarely used with accuracy. But in this instance it applies. Do I overstate, Professor Lemmon?"

"Kent was a marvel, Colonel Holmes," the professor corroborated, a little tremulously. "That helped to rouse the people to vengeance when he was done away with."

"A marvel, but flighty?"

"Irregular in his classes, certainly," the educator said, conscientiously. "He had unorthodox theories, too. He believed the gap between organic and inorganic chemistry could be spanned by the discovery or perfection of a link having the properties of both cell and electron. He did a great deal of work along the lines of insulation against friction, heat and cold."

"Do you follow this, Mr. Kurokin?" Justin Holmes asked.

"Some of it I have heard before," the Moon man replied, quietly. "But it makes clear many things."

"Professor?"

"That is about all, Colonel, except that there was nothing flighty about Mason Kent's experiment with insulation," the instructor concluded. "If he had lived, or had brought it to completion before his death, it would have revolutionized several industries. But he took no one into his confidence except his partner, Garth Gremillion."

"You see, gentlemen, this boy Kent, in spite of his youth, was a remarkable student and scientist," the publisher went on. "It is impossible to overstate his promise."

KENT had money, and the two boys, soon after they enrolled at Brooker, rigged up a laboratory. It was quite an extensive affair. They built it themselves out on the plain west of town."

"It looked like a galvanized iron, airplane hangar," Thaddeus Champion interposed, addressing Kurokin. The Moon man swayed his body forward in acknowledgment of the description.

"About that time, say three and a half years ago, you gentlemen, at the invita-

tion of Mr. Ferguson here, began your experiments in lens grinding and astronomy."

"Correct," Pop Ferguson assented.

"Naturally, a pair of boys like Mason Kent and Garth Gremillion, feeling the scientific world was their particular oyster, couldn't let a crowd of oldsters get ahead of them. They heard about the work you were doing here in Championville, and immediately began to dabble in lens grinding and telescope construction."

"I never heard that," the founder of the Sky-Peepers mused.

"By the light of what I must believe happened, from what I have learned to-night, these young men developed a telescope which eclipsed anything so far invented, many times over. They spent two entire summers and most of their evenings and all their week-end holidays working on it and the other experiments to which it led them. All this time they lived on money supplied by Mason Kent."

"Long ago they came to the conclusion you Sky-Peepers have reached to-night with the help of your Moon-reared member, Mr. Kurokin. Alone, these two discovered on the Moon what they believed to be a human race. Alone they came to the conclusion that the Moon is accessible to the earth by certain means of transportation hitherto untried. Gentlemen, they proved their theory!"

"Proved it?"

Several listeners gasped the question almost in unison. One was Erika Champion, her eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Beyond a doubt, we know now that they proved it. They worked day and night to find a way to project a human being, one of themselves, of course, to the Moon once the secret of the transition from planet to satellite had been revealed to them.

"One by one they dealt with the problems of nourishment during transit, of breathing outside the range of the earth's

atmospheric blanket, of the endurance of speed rapid enough to carry a man the great distance from earth to Moon alive, as well as the problem of communication with a strange race and with each other once the voyage should have been accomplished.

"Suddenly a catastrophe occurred which stirred this whole state, rousing public feeling to fever pitch. I can only recount it as it seemed to us here in Brooker county, since it seems to be difficult for Mr. Kurokin to understand our reactions or to accord the residents of our county other than the severest blame for what was done.

"Mason Kent disappeared, suddenly and completely. When he failed to answer roll call for several days, the school authorities made inquiry. The Marshall family, where the two boys roomed, seemed unconcerned at this lengthy absence. The students often spent several nights handrunning at the laboratory, they said. But Kent was not there, and nobody, apparently, had seen him since he left the campus one afternoon at the close of the advanced chemistry period.

"Gremillion, too, had missed his classes and had failed to turn up at the Marshall home, but the police found him, readily enough, at the laboratory the boys had built between here and Needles Mountain, on the plain west of Brooker.

"When they asked where Kent was, Gremillion laughed. When they ordered him to take the matter seriously and lend his help in finding the missing student, he joked in a tantalizing way that precipitated action. When they threatened to use force, he lost his temper completely, ordering the Brooker chief of detectives, who had arrived with a detachment of police, out of the laboratory. He told them they were interrupting the most important message that had ever come through the ether, and threatened them with every explosive in the place, if they

didn't take themselves off and leave him undisturbed.

"POLICE being police, they picked that young man up, screaming imprecations and kicking their shins and dragged him, handcuffed, to headquarters where he went through a stiff third degree. He stuck it out, laughing at them, although my police reporter over there says they might have broken his nerve, sooner or later, except for the fact that the heavy bail they held him under failed to prove as formidable as they had hoped.

"His own relatives deserted him, but, to the surprise of all concerned, Mason Kent's people from upstate came forward with the money and freed him, pending trial. How soon after that did the explosion occur, Dolman?"

"The next afternoon," True Dolman replied, gravely.

"The next afternoon a powerful explosion wrecked the laboratory where Gremillion and Kent had worked. We got out two extras that day, I recall. The second reported an occurrence toward dark of the same evening. A mail plane cracked up near the former site of the laboratory. Luckily there were no passengers. The pilot saved himself by a parachute leap before the plane caught fire, but he has never been able to explain the occurrence. It occurred high in the air, but was not caused by an explosion inside the plane.

"In the weeds where he landed this man found a few fragments of a notebook in handwriting identified as Gremillion's. These seemed quite definitely to indicate a plot against Mason Kent. At least, they seemed to do so in the light of the explosion and the utter disappearance of Kent, combined with the incriminating attitude of Gremillion and his persistent refusal to do anything but scoff at investigators. Interpreted by what we have learned to-night they have a less

sinister meaning. But read aloud at the trial they served to remove the conjectural aspect from the circumstances and the evidence; evidence which now seems scanty enough."

Kurokin grunted.

"Scanty enough," the publisher went on, levelly, ignoring the interruption. "The mail pilot turned the fragments in to the authorities. They immediately set out to re-arrest Gremillion who had been released on bond the day before. After considerable search and the consequent suspicion that he had jumped bond, they found him in your little observatory, gentlemen, on Needles Mountain. He was weeping with rage because your prized telescopes were 'too damned weak.'"

"We thought he'd sneaked in there to hide, poor devil," Thaddeus Champion recalled.

"WHAT happened thereafter we all know, except, perhaps, Mr. Kurokin. Gremillion was accused of having quarreled with his chum. The Marshalls and some of the university students had heard frequent altercations between them during the two days preceding Kent's disappearance. They found fragments of clothing caught to pieces of a steel cabinet found among the remains of the laboratory. Gremillion insisted they were scraps of an old coat Kent kept hanging in a metal clothes locker, but the State's case rested largely on the assumption that Kent himself had been bound and gagged inside this locker when investigators first came to the laboratory and questioned Gremillion where he sat at his short wave apparatus. Also that, realizing the extent of his jeopardy, Gremillion had utilized his liberty, while out on bond, in blowing the laboratory to splinters, touching off a powerful charge from a fuse planted on Needles Mountain.

"Gremillion continued to laugh at his

tormentors for a while after his second arrest, seeming to believe that everyone would soon believe his protestations that the authorities were making fools of themselves.

"Finally, however, he changed his attitude. He began reiterating that Mason Kent still lived, and, later on, from the witness stand, he made the announcement, in seeming seriousness, that his chum had gone to the Moon. He asked to be freed long enough to make promised communication with him, assuring his captors that Kent himself would soon testify as to his whereabouts.

"Naturally, the insanity defense plea was indicated. But the jury, influenced, perhaps, by the public resentment against Kent's destruction, brought in a provisional penalty, to be executed against Gremillion if they should ever recover the body. Feeling was extremely bitter both at Brooker and here in Championville, as well as up state where Kent's people live. The Kents themselves, however, were opposed to mob violence."

"Remarkable! Astounding!"

Kurokin wagged his misshapen torso in what was patently honest bewilderment.

"It seems so, in the light of what we must now believe," Justin Holmes agreed. "Now, Professor Wilson, will you go into the facts you hinted to Mr. Kurokin, Mr. Dolman and me, on the way over here to night?"

The government meteorologist from Needles Observatory, a slight, fair-haired man, rose as the publisher took the seat beside Kurokin.

"This affair has caused me no slight concern," he began, nervously. "Two years ago I received a note, hand printed in ink on ordinary writing paper, the plain linent sort. I realize, to-night something I had not noticed before. The note reached me the day Garth Gremil-

lion was taken in for questioning about the disappearance of his friend, Kent. It asked me to warn mail planes against taking the usual plateau route and to instruct them to go by way of the valley. It was urgent, but not the sort of thing to which I should be inclined to give serious attention."

"Did you give the warning?" Justin Holmes asked.

"By coincidence, yes. The gathering of storm clouds around the foot of Needles Mountain, spreading over the plateau, indicated exactly that warning for the safety of plane and passengers. It was several days before the plateau route was safe to fly again, so my warning stood until conditions cleared. That was Sunday. Sunday night I received another note like the first. I ignored it. Again, however, a coincidence of time and events had occurred not realized, by me, in their full import.

"**A**T that time Garth Gremillion was out on bond supplied by the family of Mason Kent. It happened that the regular mail pilot, a man named Anderson, was taken ill while smoking a cigarette he had removed from a package in his flying coat. He was barely able to drive home, although the attack passed quickly and left him none the worse for it.

"His substitute made a hasty re-check of the plane and found to his surprise something the routine check had evidently failed to disclose. Something was out of order, a choked feedline, I believe. This made a delay of a few minutes, during which the substitute pilot received a telephone message purporting to come from Anderson and advising him to take the valley instead of the plateau route. The pilot took the matter to a superior, who authorized the change. He made the trip safely, and made up the time lost by the longer

routing. However, he returned by the plateau route.

"In as pretty weather as you'd want to see his plane seemed to strike something, not a 'hole,' he said, but something solid, high in the clear sky above the plain west of Brooker. He saved himself by a parachute jump, found the fragments of the diary Colonel Holmes mentioned a while ago, and turned them in for evidence. He and Anderson came to me not long ago, highly indignant. Pondering over the mystery of the crack-up, they had happened to mention the telephone call supposed to have come from Anderson that day, and the pilot declared he had gone to bed immediately on reaching home and had telephoned no one. He was positive about it.

"Naturally, I could tell them nothing about the call. Their suspicions of me were aroused by notes they had received urging the route change, as a permanent measure, and recommending that they consult me for corroboration.

"Also, I myself have had two warning notes very recently urging a change of the route and asking me to use my acquaintanceship at Washington to have the Aeronautics Commission order the change to be made official and permanent.

"Believing that I recognized Mr. Kurokin's peculiar handwriting in these two latest notes, which were quite different from preceding communications in appearance and wording, I went to him about it. He admitted sending them, but said he had nothing to do with the earlier printed notes or the telephone call. As a matter of fact the early notes preceded Mr. Kurokin's arrival here by some eighteen months.

"As an explanation for his warnings, Mr. Kurokin showed me sound reasons, based on average weather-safety along the valley route, as compared with the plateau route. They were convincing.

I took them to the superintendent of routes at the commercial airport and got some very insulting accusations for my pains."

Justin Holmes nodded sympathetically. "Rumors of their suspicions have reached my desk," he commented. "Now won't you tell us something of your acquaintanceship with Mr. Kurokin? I want to establish our position as to the cooperation for which he expects to ask us.

"First, perhaps I ought to say this, however. We are in a peculiar position, gentlemen.

"In this matter, so far as we have gone, we are the representatives, in dealing with Mr. Kurokin, not of Championville, not of amateur astronomy, not of the county of Brooker, nor our State, nor even of America. We represent the planet earth!"

"**B**Y gosh, that's so!" ejaculated Mayor Champion. Erika chuckled at the ludicrously abrupt response to the climax which the publisher had reached. True Dolman smiled.

"Mr. Kurokin came to me as one meteorologist to another," Dr. Wilson said, simply. "Anyone would be impressed with his learning, his intellect. Professor Lemmon will tell you that Mr. Kurokin's mathematics, his celestial calculations, are far beyond anything we can grasp. Now, however, that I've lent him my books, he has been able to simplify our symbols and processes immensely.

"He has been a tremendous help in my government work. The plotting of storm areas just mentioned is only one instance. That the airport people happened to take it as a matter for suspicion makes it none the less an achievement. He has put in hours of labor, with me, with no hope of reward except a few little favors such as introductions to you

gentlemen and some slight help I could give him in mastering English.

"Since we are being frank to-night—and I hope you'll pardon us, Mr. Kurokin, for dissecting you this way in your presence,—I'll admit that I wondered where he came from. I suspected that he preferred not to attract the attention of the immigration authorities." He smiled a white, frail smile. "Ridiculous, now that we know whence he came, is it not? I even felt a little guilty. We government men try to stick together, somewhat."

"Thank you, Dr. Wilson," Justin Holmes said, with satisfaction. "Now, Mr. Kurokin, so far as we could, we've laid our cards on the table. You, yourself, are best able to fill in the gaps. First, however, I'll tell you gentlemen this much of what Mr. Kurokin has reported to Dr. Wilson and me this evening before we came into this hall.

"Mason Kent reached the Moon alive and well. Six months ago Mr. Kurokin left him there, sound in wind and limb.

"How the thing was done, what chance there is for him to be brought back safely to free his friend and help right the wrong that has been done, our friend from the Moon can tell you far better than I can. Mr. Kurokin."

CHAPTER III

THE dwarf rose and bowed in his formal way. The motion, inherently courtly, emphasized the ludicrous length of his torso in comparison with his stunted legs.

"Zhentlemen," he began slowly, almost painfully, "My earth language is so inadequate, I hardly know how to say whadt you wis-sh to hear. When you tell me thadt, besides this terrible language of many thousands of words-s you haf also differentt tongues, and sometimes more than one, in each of the

other earth nations-s, the marvel is greater-r still that you know so much, andt, yedt progress-s so little.

"Adt your Sky-peeper meetings-s, I haf heardt you speculadte, andt guess-s, aboutt my own Kro-del-tsar, thadt you call the Moon.

"Becaus-s of the position-n of earth and Kro-del-tsar, you can-n see, with your nakedt eyes-s and with your telescopes-s, one side only. You see high mountainss, which you call volcanic, and white marks-s, which you say cannot be roads-s, though you also say, shrewdly, thadt they look like roads-s. Your guessing is sounder than your logic. They are roads-s, and protective covering of our surface tunnels-s, wide enough for three hundredt of our vehicles, geared for groundt, air or subterranean travel, to drive abreasdt.

"You see peaks, and call them cones-s. You see, with your weak earth telescopes, no life. So you say, for thousands-s of years, there has-s been no life.

"You say, sadtly, 'The earth is a be-reavedt mother. She hadt one childt, the moon, andt it diedt!

"Thadt, zhentlemen, is wise guessing-g. The moon is deadt, of a certainty. When you say it has-s now no atmosphere, no moderation-n of headt, lightt or darkness-s, you are rightt. But to haf saidt no life is there, becaus-s for long-s earth man sees no life on Kro-del-tsar, that is childish and unscientific."

"How do you sustain life without atmosphere?" Dr. Wilson demanded.

"We make atmosphere. The tall structures-s you call cones-s are greadt pumps-s, my friendt. For longer-r than the history of your presendt civilization our huge interplanetary pumps-s on Kro-del-tsar haf drawn moisture from your earth oceans-s. Twice in each of our moon Kro-lats, or hours-s, which correspondt in length to your earth days-s,

the power-r is appliedt, and releasedt. The moisture is drawn-n, distilledt, and turnedt, chemically, into air, down beneath the surface where we live. There we can-n make use of it without waste. The pull and release of the pressure you haf long observedt. You call it the ebb andt flow of the tides-s."

Curiously, this statement proved a greater visible shock to the little company than had their stupendous discovery of life on the moon or the announcement, earlier in the evening, that the man they had known as a neighbor and fellow-scientist was a visitor from another sphere.

"It's incredible!" Professor Lemmon groaned, his face in his hands.

"Budt true, I assure you," the dwarf countered.

"Incredible that anything so simple should so long have deceived the wise men of all times," Dr. Wilson corrected.

Thaddeus Champion's reaction was different. He faced Kurokin almost truculently.

"We've been right about the Moon having cooled to freezing on one side while it's sizzling hot on the other, haven't we?" he demanded, in an injured tone. "How do you stand that, you moon folks?"

"THE Moon man-n,—pardon-n my frankness, zhentlemen, is farther along the roadt of civilization-n than you on your larger planedt." Kurokin gestured with his huge hands.

"As Kro-del-tsar cooled slowly the Moon dwellers-s, remote ancestors of those of us now living, hadt to solve many problems-s.

"As the crusdt cooledt, they dug channels, burrowing deeper and deeper beneath the surface. There they foundt shelter-r from the fierce sunrays-s andt drew nearer the controlledt fires-s at the Moon's center-r for protection-n from

the alternative, bitter coldt.

"I haf saidt, zhentlemen, that you earth men-n are many thousandts of years-s of developmendt behindt the moon people. Budt, on any sphere, it is-s to be hopedt and supposedt that an occasional genius-s arrives-s who is of the future, nodt the presentt, in mindt and in developmendt of brain-n power-r.

"The earth hadt such a man of the future. He was the studendt, Mason-n Kent. He anticipatedt, by many years-s, our own projectedt establishmendt of communication-n between-n earth andt moon. He bridgedt the gap thadt hadt baffledt us. Already he hadt discoveredt the insulation-n process-s andt the breathing apparatus-s we of Kro-del-tsar use when-n we musdt leave our subterranean-n homes andt brave the surface for any reason-n.

"Kent's methodt of conquering space between-n moon andt earth was undreamedt of by us-s. Mason-n Kent, mentally, although nodt physically, is farther down the march of time even than the dwellers-s of Kro-del-tsar.

"Zhentlemen," the dwarf broke off, wearily, "I tire. Already I haf once to-nightt talked much, to our young friendt of the press-s." He turned to True Dolman, with a shrug of his powerful shoulders.

Dolman glanced at the publisher of the *'Enterprise.'* Justin Holmes nodded assent.

"Do the best you can, Dolman," he said. "If you go wide of the mark, Mr. Kurokin can correct you."

Dolman stood up.

"Most of this has been hardly more than hinted at, you understand," he warned his employer and the rest of his audience. "From what Mr. Kurokin sketched in hurriedly for me up in his rooms, and what I've pieced together while you've been going over this thing

here to night, I'm fairly clear on this much:

"Mason Kent discovered some brand new atomic or electronic principle early in his research work, probably stumbling on the germ of it at school.

"From what Professor Lemmon said a few minutes ago, we can suppose that Kent hinted at it in class and was laughed down. So he and his friend Gremillion worked it out on their own, saying no more to anyone.

"Briefly, what they found must have been a metal with several new properties and some others not entirely new. This metal was invisible, except under violet rays.

"It must have been. Happenings which Colonel Holmes and Dr. Wilson have already touched on prove it. Hold on, though. It must have been visible from the earth side of the moon, Mr. Kurokin?"

The moon man swayed forward.

"The lack of density was in our favor-r," he affirmed.

"THE new metal weighed less than any metal known to industrial physics," the reporter went on. "In spite of this low specific gravity, it had sufficient density to allow the creation of a vacuum in space walled in by tubular boundaries made of the new substance.

"Mr. Kurokin says that Mason Kent's discovery, as nearly as Kent could explain it to scientists on the moon without a common language or common scientific symbols, seems to have been the hitherto undiscovered link between organic and inorganic chemistry. A sort of 'missing link,' which he called a metallo-organism."

"So Kent made a rocket out of his lightweight metal?" Professor Lemmon asked.

"No, professor. The most remarkable thing about the metallo-organism, or or-

gano-metal, discovered by Kent and Gremillion is that the units, the size of electrons or smaller, reproduce themselves as organic cells do.

"Working under violet rays, Mason Kent formed the first of the organo-metallic cultures into a small hollow ring.

"The growth so proceeded that a tube, like a stick of macaroni, formed. Satisfied that he was on the right track, he tried it on a much larger scale. The result seems to have been something like a length of irrigating tile, straight and true, but so light in weight it failed to register on chemical balances."

"Zounds!" Professor Lemmon shouted. "Kent always had some such idea in his head. And we called him flighty!"

Kurokin made the impatient grunting sound the little gathering had learned to associate with his ill-concealed contempt for the denseness of earth dwellers in failing to recognize genius or to deal out justice.

Dolman went on:

"Obviously, experiments with a thing of that size required space. Kent staked out acreage on the plateau west of Brooker and Gremillion helped him build the metal laboratory in which they experimented from that time on until the disappearance of Kent.

"Already their big idea was taking form. The roof of the laboratory was constructed with a hole in it through which a tube could be projected large enough to hold the thickly insulated body of a man.

"You see, being a couple of foolhardy kids, for all the ground they had covered in original scientific research, they planned to make the most far-fetched use of their discovery possible, instead of taking older and steadier scientists into their confidence, so their discovery could be developed constructively and safely.

"The thing that pleased them most, it

is easy to imagine, was the rapidity with which the tube grew. They could start it off any day they liked. Inside a week it would be long enough to reach to the moon. They had several sound reasons for choosing the moon rather than another planet or satellite. For one thing, travelling constantly parallel with the earth the moon presented less of a problem of orbit variation than other bodies would have done. The extreme lightness of the metal obviated the danger of its breaking off of its own weight."

"Not so foolhardy as you'd make them out, Dolman," Justin Holmes said dryly.

Dolman acknowledged the interruption with a smile.

"They were still more cautious than that," he admitted. "They worked two years or more after discovering the organo-metal, before making any attempt to reach the moon. They kept the culture alive and limited its growth, realizing that, uncontrolled, it could have buried them and all humanity like so much lava.

"During those two years, and impatient years they must have been, they were trying to find a way to limit the extension of the growth not from the newest, but from the oldest cells. They could stop the extension of the tube, regulating its length to the fraction of an inch, by sending certain rays through the end of latest growth.

"But, for their purpose, they had to conduct those rays from the base of the tube to the tip, so they could regulate its length from a great distance on the basis of time calculation."

"Astounding!" Dr. Wilson cried.

"Considerate!" Kurokin corrected, wagging his giant's head. "The lads wanted to reach the moon, not poke a hole through it!"

A laugh rippled around the circle, relieving the tension.

"IMPUDENT young scoundrels!" Thaddeus Champion exclaimed, admiringly.

"Weren't they?" was True Dolman's enthusiastic rejoinder. "Well, they found, at last, rays fast enough and effective enough to check the growth without destroying the structure already existing, and which would function without so energizing the tube as to create sufficient heat to endanger the man inside. Providing, of course, that he was protected in their specially constructed insulation."

"How did they work? With a miniature model?" Professor Lemmon asked.

"Up to the time these rays were perfected, they must have," Dolman conjectured. "But, by that time, they had also worked out a self-functioning breathing apparatus, built into the insulation-uniform, which created its own air mixture from storage supplies. Mr. Kurokin says it is less bulky than the one in daily use on Kro-del-tsar, but based on identical principles."

"Kent was well along toward that in his class work at school," Professor Lemmon interpolated.

"By that time," Dolman pursued, "everything was approaching readiness for the big experiment. The boys calculated speed of growth in ratio to distance, and settled back to solve the last and the only difficulty which proved actually baffling."

"Didn't they know that all astronomical science agreed that the moon was dead and had been uninhabited for thousands of years?" Thaddeus Champion demanded, in his truculent way.

"Oh, but they didn't believe it," Justin Holmes answered. "Don't overlook the unprecedented size and effectiveness of the telescope the young scamps had perfected. This alone would have been a creditable lifetime achievement for an average seasoned scientist. Look what acclaim Galileo's memory still reaps from

a like invention of less power and scope! But it was only a bit of motivating apparatus to them.

"Having made pikers not only of you Sky-peepers but of the biggest optics experts of all time, they saw, long ago, what you are only beginning to make note of, activity on the moon.

"The difference is this: Being adult and fearsome, you think first of your fellowman, and wait to devise means to break the news to him gently.

"**Y**OUTH knows no such caution. Those boys would have shouted their discovery to the skies, in all probability, if they hadn't had a very sound hunch that we oldsters would promptly find some way to stop their precious experiment."

"Well," Thaddeus Champion commented dryly, "I can't say Gremillion found a very sympathetic reception when he tried, later on, to take us into his confidence."

"Won't you please hurry on to the remaining problem, True?" Erika begged impatiently.

"The first, real stumbling block confronted Kent and Gremillion almost as soon as they had completed their plans for establishing a vacuum in the organo-metallic tube, said Dolman.

"I suppose it is obvious to most of you what the boys meant to do. They hoped to create a suction-inducing vacuum and shoot a man to the moon by the vacuum pressure method, something in the way mail is carried through tubes from one postal station to another, or as the small telegram cartridges carry messages from floor to floor in our modern telegraph offices.

"The creation of the vacuum presented very little difficulty. Their intensive research in the problems of insulation had given them data which put them well ahead of currently disseminated knowl-

edge of the vacuum and its induction and use. The question was, how to close the distant end of the tube, and, once it was closed, how could the earth man emerge when he arrived at the moon end of his journey?"

"Couldn't be done," Thaddeus Champion said, admiringly, "but the young devils probably did it."

Dolman nodded.

"Mason Kent committed the final audacity," he said, in a hushed voice, "He was impatient of the long delay caused by the necessity for pioneer research at every step he and Gremillion had taken in providing for a new method of conquering space. He told his partner that he was ready to admit this final problem was unsolvable at this end. He announced his intention to rely on the moon dwellers themselves, in whose existence he firmly believed, to solve the difficulty for him.

"Gremillion objected violently. He contended that this problem, too, could be worked out, given time and patience. Kent argued that the moon people must be much farther along the course of evolution than earth dwellers, to have survived against conditions on their sphere. He was stubbornly determined to count on their superior intelligence and to rely on them to foretell his impending arrival and help him out of the tube when he reached the end of his journey."

Erika was leaning forward, her eager, little face alive with interest. There was a distinct note of hero-worship in her tone as she asked:

"What made him so sure the moon people would be friendly?"

The dwarf, Kurokin, answered the question.

"He reasoned that we of Kro-deltar would be the gainers by interplanetary exploration-n," he explained, in his quiet voice.

Justin Holmes turned quickly and looked at the moon man. He seemed about to speak, but closed his lips as if locking them against possible indiscretion.

"Drive on, Dolman," Champion said.

"So they started their tube off, Gremillion protesting and Kent refusing to listen, and hurried home from classes every day to compute growth.

THEY could see only the end inside the laboratory, where they could use violet rays. The vacuum device was ready. The insulated cocoon with its built-in breathing apparatus and supplies, was completed. Gremillion demanded that they draw lots to determine who should make the journey. He was firmly convinced that Kent's refusal to wait for a solution of the cloture and emergence problems meant certain death for the man chosen to make the journey.

"They argued in school and out, at home and at the laboratory. These arguments made it look bad for Gremillion at the trial, for, without disclosing the experiment or their discoveries, he made sullen and angry, if evasive, remarks about Kent, which sounded threatening and vindictive to outsiders. His certainty that his idol was needlessly plunging himself into eternity made his recriminations against him all the more bitter.

"Kent refused to draw lots. He insisted that he would go, or he would destroy the apparatus and never resume the experiments."

"Why?" Professor Lemmon asked. "They had been partners throughout the experiment?"

"Kent trusted his own resourcefulness more than he trusted Garth Gremillion's, I suppose," Dolman hazarded.

"They seem to have realized that the man arriving on the moon would have some tall explaining to do, under tremen-

dous difficulties, and that he must be able to think fast. Neither of them doubted Kent's superior mentality.

"What they failed to count on," Justin Holmes interposed, "was the possibility that the student left behind would be in greater peril from his acquaintances and neighbors than the voyager to the moon could expect to encounter from an unknown race on an unexplored sphere.

"Kurokin tells us that Mason Kent was hospitably received, on the moon. Here on earth, we tore Gremillion, the partner he left behind, away from the epoch-making first space message ever received on earth. We did our best to hang him by the neck until he was dead. Failing that, we shut him up in an asylum peopled with maniacs, where, sooner or later, he is certain to lose his mind.

"If Kent had used as much logic concerning the mob psychology of the people of the earth as he employed with regard to people on the moon, he might have stayed here and sent Gremillion to Kro-del-tsar in their invisible vacuum tube."

Kurokin came forward, his squat figure casting a shadow along the rostrum floor, a shadow that bent sharply where the platform joined the wall.

"Thousands of years ago," he said, accusingly, "we of Kro-del-tsar perfected the science of separating guilt from innocence. No such injustice as the Gremillion-n murder-r trial couldt happen-n with us-s. By telepathic process-s, a guilty conscience proclaimss idts own-n guilt. The criminal attendts to his own-n punishmendt."

Thaddeus Champion stared.

"You say you folks are the gainers by any visiting back and forth that results out of Kent's discovery," he reminded the moon man. "By golly, I'm not so sure about that. Looks like there

are a few things we could learn from you!"

Kurokin bowed and turned his smouldering black gaze on the speaker, but he made no reply. He looked quite as long and steadily at Erika, sitting starry-eyed and thrilled, leaning forward with her round little chin in one palm. Justin Holmes consulted his watch.

"Get on with your conjectures, Dolman," he said. "There is much to be done. I don't know what suggestions Mr. Kurokin expects to make, but I assume we will all be needed, in one capacity or another, to work out a plan to carry them out. It's well past midnight now, and I hope to start things moving early in the morning to get Gremillion freed."

"But that is all the story, so far as I can tell it," True Dolman protested. "That much, I could piece together from what Mr. Kurokin learned from Kent about the experiments, and what I knew at first hand from covering the explosion, the airplane wreck and the Gremillion murder trial. What happened when Kent reached the moon I do not know."

With a word of inquiry, Justin Holmes turned to the moon man.

CHAPTER IV

"I KNOW what you wouldt haf me tell," the dwarf said, turning his black eyes, over which an intangibly opaque curtain seemed to have dropped, on the publisher. "How didt Mason-n Kent make his moon landing-g? Why didt I, an astronomer of the government of Kro-delt-tsar, come to your planet in place of Mason-n Kent? Why has Kent nodt returnedt?"

"Zhentlemen, I haf convincedt myself to-nightt of your honesdt intentions-s. The persecution-n of the scientisdt, Gremillion, was causedt by the blundering

of the people collectively. Yedt, individually, you wish him well.

"To me that is darkness-s, bafflemendt. I know no more now, to tell me whadt to do, than when I firsdt spoke to my fellow scientisdt, Dr. Wilson-n, in his home six months ago. I am bewilderdt.

"Some of your question-s I can answer.

"As to the arrival of Mason Kent, our telescopes-s on Kro-delt-tsar haf long-g seen-n earth people, andt haf watchedt their progress-s. We haf considerdt making the attemptt to visidt the earth. Budt all our inventions-s musdt be submitted to the governmentt for approval, and none of the proposedt space ships-s was deemedt adequadte. We were toldt we musdt work andt waitt.

"Some years-s ago our shordt wave instrumentts of Kro-delt,—whadt you call radio, began registerin-ng the shordt wave experiments made by Gremillion. This is the firsdt we knew thadt Kro-delt, wireless-s, is known-n to earth people. We gave ofer the time of two experdts, day andt nightt, to watchingt the progress-s of these youths-s, andt to catching-g such messages of theirs-s as we couldt. We treatedt their symbols as a cipher-r, andt untangledt something-g of the queer-r andt clumsy earth speech in thadt way. Naturally, we supposedt the languagee we pickedt up to be a uniform speech, the only one in use on your planett.

"I oversaw some of this-s work. I submittedt to the governmentt a proposal, nearly three years ago, to try to communicadte with the two young-g men. Our instructions-s were to watch tirelessly, andt waitt.

"My interesdt was arousedt by the courage transmittedt by shordt wave andt transferredt to our television-n screens-s. We couldt catch emotions-s

when-n wordts receivedt meandt nothing to us. These boys-s' thoughts showedt no doubt, no fear-r, no thoughtd of failure.

"Soon-n it was apparendt to us that the earth experimenters-s hadt perfectedt apparatus thadt enabeledt them to see us. Nefer hadt a time been so ripe for earth dwellers-s to see activity on the surface of Kro-del-tsar. We hadt our firstd permanendt watch postedt on the earth side of our sphere. Crowdts of moon dwellers-s, insulatedt in protective insulation-n andt carrying breathing-g apparatus-s, gatheredt daily on our highest peaks-s and atop our tower-pumps-s, pleading-g for a glimpse of the earth. The greadt telescope the boys hadt buildt discoveredt something of this unusual surface activity on the moon. The inevitable happenedt. Gremillion andt Kent began planning-g a visidt to our planedt, andt their hopes-s registered by way of short wave, to our television-n screens-s.

"WE were baffledt as to their proposedt methodt. Twenty thousand years-s beyondt the earth in scientific progress-s, still we hadt no space ship we couldt trust to make the journey. The governmentd steadfastly refusedt to allow our greadt minds to risk their safety in any but a fully approvedt vehicle. No one of us-s wouldt haf dreamedt of disobeying.

"At lasdt, I, the chief observer on duty in charge of a crew of experdts, experimenting with strengthening our telescopes-s, saw something-g like a great gun pointed towardt us. In the rarity of our atmosphere, or lack of idt, its mouth was plainly visible. This agreedt with the projection-n of the thoughtd of this same great gun-like tube, which Gremillion-n was constandtly trying-g to describe to us by shordt wave Kro-delt. For the firstd time, the television-n

screen-ns registeredt doubt, the uncertainty feldt by the studentd Gremillion-n.

"He triedt again andt again, unknown to his friendt, to establish communication-n with us of Kro-del-tsar. He triedt symbols-s, everything-g. His friendt's plan of starting-g with no assurance of cooperation-n from the moon dwellers-s hadt the young man panic-stricken-n.

"I wendt again to the governmentd of Kro-del-tsar. They authorizedt me to sendt Gremillion-n a message, anything-g, intelligible or nodd, enough to ledt him know that we existedt, thadt his effortds, to some extendt at leasdt, hadt nodd been in vain. You see, we of Kro-del-tsar ardently wishedt for the success-s of the boys-s' experimentd.

"When he receivedt our message, Gremillion-n wendt wildt with joy. Apparently he had realizedt thadt only a wave far shorter than any being-g transmittedt from earth senders wouldt find reception-n on his specially constructedt receiver.

"We learnedt from Kent thadt Gremillion toldt him nothing of our message. Budt he withdrew his violentd objection-ns to the carrying on of the experimentd.

"Almosdt adt once the tube came closer-r. Our engineers-s discussedt possible methodts of closing the endt of the tube. They computedt its circumference andt hurriedly constructedt a cap, with a greadt padded bag inside in which the earth man couldt anchor andt encase himself, providing-g he hadt given-n himself apparatus-s to haldt his speed near the endt of his journey. Like Kent, we trusted much to logic, arguing-g thadt a man so brilliandt as to devise a way to reach Kro-del-tsar wouldt recognize the help we offeredt andt a way to make use of idt.

"We triedt to assure the two experimenters-s, by directt message, thadt we

were friendly to their plan. Budt the youths-s hadt made no television-n arrangemendts, at leasdt, they hadt nothing in thadt way powerful enough to receive our messages-s. Telepathy, apparently, earth people haf nodd developedt as yetd.

"Only the inspiredt, or, perhaps, foolhardty optimism of Kent made him test the earth endt of the completedt tube again andt again for cloture. When-n our cap was fittedt securely andt lockedt, he made a test thadt succeedt. We hadt made sure the growth of the tube hadt been safely stoppedit before affixing the cap. Our greatestt anxiety, thadt the earth scientists-s might have miscalculatedt andt that the tube wouldt break off againsdt a Kro-del-star peak, wreck some of our greadt pumps-s, or, if strong enough, transfix our planedt, was dissipatedt. We watchedit and listenedt for vibrations-s to indicate that the vacuum was establishedt andt the journey begun-n. The secondt day waves-s of joy and excitementt began to register-r on the television-n screen-n attachedt to the Kro-del-tsar shordt wave apparatus-s recording the earth waves. Gremillion-n was still trying-g to sendt us messages-s, but his emotions-s hadt changedt. His friendt was on the way!"

A SIGH escaped the listening Sky-peepers and their guests.

"Adt lasdt we heard muffedt taps. We tapped in reply. Again-n the taps soundted. They were insidte the cap. The earth visitor-f had understoodt andt made use of our device, enclosing himself in the anchored bag so he couldt not be suckedt back to earth when the opening-g of the tube destroyed the vacuum.

"We removedt the cap andt openedt the case. We liftedt Kent from idt andt carriedt him to my undergroundt dwelling-g.

"In his insulation-n, our earth visitor lookedt much like a moon man. Unwrappedt, in my library, we thoughtt him the mosdt beautiful person-n we hadt ever seen. He was two feedt taller-r than the tallesdt of us—I am consideredt almosdt a giandt, zhentlemen, on Kro-del-tsar, and fairer than any woman-n exceptt only the daughter-r of our government chief, Kro-lesda, who is a marvel to our generationn, a throwback to moon dwellers-s of long ago. We gatheredt to admire him. Especially we praisedt his symmetrical proportions-s, more ideal-l than those of the statues-s producedt in the governmentt academy. Our study of our own-n evolution-n hadt preparedt us for a greadt difference in appearance from our own-n diminishedt heightt andt ungainly proportions-s, budt, even so, we marveldt at the youth, Kent.

"Apparently our own-n appearance surprisedt our visitor nodd adt all, for he betrayedt no astonishmentt. He laughedt, showing white teeth which arousedt new admiration-n from all who saw them, and saidt whadt we understoodt later to be thadt we lookedt much as his friendt, Gremillion-n, hadt foretoldt in a crayon-n drawing madte for fun-n one day adt school.

"He was nodd hungry, nor thirsty. He was concernedt aboutt his safety among-g us-s nodd adt all. So well hadt he plannedt, he was in excellendt physical condition-n. Budt soon-n it was apparentt to us-s thadt he became greadtly excitedt."

The dwarf had turned to Dolman of the 'Enterprise' as he spoke. Dolman responded.

"Picture this, if you can," he invited. "Mason Kent had just completed the first successful journey from the earth to the moon. He was being acclaimed by the moon dwellers with an enthusiasm no one could mistake. Like all Amer-

icans brought up in the Lindbergh tradition, you can imagine what a kick he must have gotten out of what he'd done.

"But his whole concern was for something he had overlooked while on earth. It had just occurred to Mason Kent, for the first time, that the vacuum tube through which he had made his ascent was in the direct route of the air-line to the East. He knew it was invisible; he knew it would wreck anything striking it at high speed, for Gremillion had proved the organo-metal's resistance to solids by throwing a plate at the tube, shattering it in pieces while the tube itself remained unscarred.

"Sooner or later a plane was bound to strike the obstruction resulting in loss of life. The route was used by passenger planes as well as mail planes. The situation was a serious one.

"**K**ENT made Mr. Kurokin and the other moon scientists understand his predicament by pantomime and the use of the words the moon men had pieced out by deciphering, code-like, the messages Gremillion had been sending by short wave. He obtained government permission to use the Kro-del-tsar sending apparatus to talk to Gremillion, announce his safe arrival and warning him to have the airport authorities post danger signals above the laboratory where the tube stretched upward toward the moon.

"Apparently it struck him, too, that Gremillion's story might not be credited. Because he warned Gremillion that he might find it necessary to use extreme measures, and authorized him to stop at nothing, even though Kent's return to earth might be jeopardized or sacrificed to the safety of the flying public. Gremillion had been living day and night at the laboratory awaiting a message. It reached him safely. He had just begun a reply when—"

"Our brilliant authorities came in and handcuffed him," Thaddeus Champion said, disgustedly. "The shame of it!"

Kurokin's black eyes glowed somberly. "I visited Gremillion-n once, in his cell," he said. "The guards-s interrupted us, and forbade me to return-n, saying I excited the patient too much. He toldt me a little, however. Your police rushedt him away from the message between your earth andt our Kro-del-tsar, handcuffedt, budt, with the help of a boy who followedt him to Broker-s, in the crowdt, he smuggledt a note to Dr. Wilson-n, adt the observatory, begging him to keep the planes-s off the plateau route, even-n if only temporarily. He expectedt to be releasedt at once andt to receive messages-s from Kent authorizing him to announce his moon arrival-l to the worldt.

"By accidentt, as he has toldt you, weather-r conditions-s justified a storm warning-g againstt the plateau route. Later-r, oudt on bail, but unable, because of atmospheric conditions-s, to reach Kent by short wave, Gremillion-n, in desperation-n, achievedt delays by putting a mildt emetic on the cigarettes-s of the pilot, Anderson-n, andt, later, telephoning-g Anderson's substitute, warning him to fly by way of the valley. He had triedt to see the superintendendt of routes adt the airportt, and been refusedt an interview. He triedt desperately, budt, by methods more childish than his partner Kent would have utilizedt, to gedt Dr. Wilson-n to insidt, for climatic reason-ns, thadt the valley route be adopted permanently.

"Feverishly he waitedt for the public space message from Kent to come through and win world wide fame for the partner he worshippedt. Even-n in dire danger-r, he was unwilling-g to make an anti-climax of this-s greadt news eventt by preparing-g the public to receive idt.

"TO his dismay, neither the government representatives nor the airport people took his warnings seriously. Every delay was only temporary. His messages to Kro-del-tsar and Kent refused to carry. He had contrived to get outgoing planes directed safely, but soon realized the danger that they would return by the route in which the laboratory lay. His suspicion was confirmed by a message to the commercial airport, which, later, they tried in vain to trace. Having been urged by Kent to take extreme measures if necessary, he rigged up a powerful charge, ran the fuse to Needles Peak, and, in the panic brought on by his desperation, he dynamited the precious laboratory, the greatest cradle of invention of the age. He was quixotically determined to destroy the menacing earth end of the tube.

"Partially, he succeeded. Planes flying at a normal height are safe. But it happened that Anderson's substitute, flying high, struck the down-jutting end of the projection—"

"Boy!" True Dolman breathed. "What a story that wreck would have made, if we'd only known what obstruction that ship struck! And how different this past two years would have been for Garth Gremillion!"

"And has Mason Kent received no messages from his chum?" Erika asked, almost breathlessly.

"None," Kurokin replied. "With the laboratory was destroyed the only short wave instrument on earth approaching satellite distance powers. The result and imprisonment of the only man on earth capable of reconstructing it left no hope of communication. We soon learned that it was impossible to reestablish a vacuum in Kent's tube. We knew, then, that something had broken off the tube. Of

course, Kent had once attributed that to his emergency instructions to his friend, and surmised what had happened. He knew that something grave had befallen Gremillion to necessitate such drastic measures as the destruction of the tube.

"By now, he had become used to our thought transmission. He had picked up our language rapidly, for our sentence symbols are few. We had many conversations. I told him what we of Kro-del-tsar hoped might result from interplanetary communication between moon and earth. He agreed with our government chief that such communication would be mutually beneficial. We held a great official meeting, at which some of our problems were made clear to Kent, and he told us what we had already suspected, that he had worked out a way to return to his home planet, in spite of the partial destruction of his vacuum tube and the impossibility of reestablishing a vacuum."

The moon man's tone had changed. The Sky-peepers, the press representatives, and Erika Champion sensed the change and stirred, uneasily. The dwarf's eyes had clouded with anger.

"We learned then, for the first time, how backward your earth civilization is," Kurokin said, marking off his words like the fateful ticking of a great clock. "We had put our case to Kent, and asked him, in all trust, to return to earth and explain it to earth authorities, arranging an interplanetary conference between the government of Kro-del-tsar and his own government."

"Z HENTLEMEN, I ask you to imagine our astonishment."

"This genius of all the ages, years beyond our own development in his conquering of space, told us, a trifle

shamefacedly, idt is true, thadt so far from being-g a powerful prince of earth, making-g his journey with the consent andt authority of governmentt, thadt he was a nobody, even-n in the confines-s of his own nation-n andt his own state. 'Just a country yahoo attending a hick college, likely to be jailedt as a crank or a nut the minute I open-n my mouth aboutt where I've been andt whadt I've done," was the way he pudt idt.

"Many of our 'number-r grumbledt thadt our television-n-telepathic equipmentt shouldt haf allowedt us to be so deceivedt. Our experdt operator-s defendedt the apparatus-s by explaining-g that idt was the enormous optimism andt the supreme confidence of Kent which hadt deceivedt us-s. Who budt a powerful-l prince, with all earth sponsoring-g him, couldt, they arguedt, come to a strange sphere with no hesitancy, no fear?

"He toldt us he hadt come with no intention-n of deceidt, thadt so far as he couldt induce his own-n nation-n to take him seriously, he wouldt do his besdt to gedt us a hearing.

"He saidt thadt this mightt come to pass, thadt his own country mightt even agree to a moon-earth amalgamation-n for the goodt of both planedt andt satellite, being so notoriously humanitarian in relations-s with foreigners thadt other nations-s often misreadt its motives.

"Budt, he also saidt, earth is made up nodd of one nation-n, budt of many. The differendt governments were inclined, he declaredt, to disagree on-n questions-s of far less-s importdt than interplanetary amalgamation-n. He offeredt to return-n adt once andt submidt our proposal, but couldt gif us no assurance of success-s.

"We were stunnedt. Obviously, from such a disorganizedt andt backwardt planedt, nodd even unifiedt under one governmentt, we couldt hope for little better than destruction, sooner or later,

if your many nations-s are so grasping andt selfish as Kent wouldt haf us believe.

"We testedt him with our guildt machines, to discover-r any intendt to deceive us-s, budt, obviously, he believedt whadt he said. We hadt suspected him, somewhadt, of disgustt with our ugly faces andt squadt figures-s, andt the fear thadt our greater-r intellectual progress-s mightt leadt us to attemptt domination-n of the earth if he supportedt our plan.

"Budt it was plain-n thadt he was sincere in disclaiming-g political power on his own-n planedt. If such a paragon-n of faith andt optimism doubtedt, then-n his doubts mustt be foundedt on fact.

"Zhentlemen, Mason Kent is kindly treated on Kro-del-tsar. But he is restrainedt from returning to earth until I repordt whadt I findt here. How can we assure ourselves-s thadt Kent, returnedt to earth, with his greadt powers-s of intellect andt invention, will nodd reopen communication-n with Kro-del-tsar andt set free forces thadt will hasten-n our destruction-n?

"Already we are doomedt, for the moon's inner fires die, century by century. Already our race suffers-s from wandt of space, as we burrow deeper andt deeper into the heardt of Kro-del-tsar."

THADDEUS CHAMPION towered over the dwarf threateningly.

"Do you mean to say you have had the effrontery to hold that boy as hostage unless we agree to whatever you demand?" he growled. "And that knowing we may be unable to do what you want, no matter how much, individually, we may want to?"

Kurokin remained passive beneath this belligerence. He sighed, when he finally answered:

"I haf learnedt only to-nightt the

truth Mason Kent tried to help us realize. A planet may be made up of fair-minded individuals, and yet, as an entity, a government made of those individuals may be most unlike them in actions-s, emotions-s, in policies-s.

"This-s is illustrated by your Booker county. Dr. Wilson-n, Mayor Champion-n, your teachers-s, your publishers-s, all representatives of government in one way or another or molders's of the people's thoughts-s, individually, even collectively, here in this-s group tonight, you respect genius and want to foster and protect it.

"Yet your State, representing you and others-s believing as you believe, could shackles Gremillion-n, could even have criminally imprisoned him, and yet, though you might disapprove greatly, you could not interfere."

"Individually we may be as powerless as you say," Justin Holmes replied, motioning the bristling Champion to a seat in a persuasive but unobtrusive gesture. "But as a group, I'm not so sure. As Kent so frankly admitted with regard to himself, the average earth citizen, even in America, is not usually possessed of great power, although there are exceptions. Not being tremendously wealthy or prominent politically, no one of us, alone, could be of much use to you. Yet, I think, there is hope.

"In this country a group of small town leaders of standing, at home, and with good connections elsewhere, is almost certain to enjoy a certain respect. We are men whose word, collectively, is likely to be credited, I think, if we decide to act, we shall be listened to.

"Professor Lemmon has a national reputation among mathematicians; perhaps, owing to a book he has written, he is known even internationally. Mr. Ferguson has had considerable publicity which has earned him a big amateur rating as an astronomer. Dr. Wilson

is a government man whose friends at Washington have a voice. My newspaper is what Kent would probably have told you is merely a little bigger-and-livelier-than-average 'hick town daily.' Yet it is a member of a press association reaching around the world. Its dispatches are disseminated as readily as those of the biggest dailies printed.

"All this is important, but there are other considerations even more encouraging. In you and in Garth Gremillion we have two tremendous assets!

"In spite of the truth of Kent's statement to you moon dwellers, our country is a leader, which commands the respectful attention of all other nations, even though, as he pointed out, there is no such thing as a unified earth government, such as you have on Krodel-tsar. What the United States decides will be based, I believe, on the welfare of the whole planet, and I venture to predict that its decision will be accepted.

"Now, Mr. Kurokin, how did you get here without the aid of Kent's vacuum-suction process, and what is your mission?"

CHAPTER V

THE dwarf passed a muscular hand across his brow, and spoke wearily.

"Mason Kent found a way to utilize the broken tube," he said. "He expected, of course, to make use of the emergency device himself. But, in the circumstances-s, we were forced to consider it unwise to permit his return-n. I had worked with him in getting-g supplies-s for his experiments from the government laboratories and had taken pains-s to acquaint myself with something of his language. Moreover-r, being-g a government man, I holdt the authority to treadt with the earth governments on behalf of the government of Krodel-tsar.

"Therefore I was chosen-n to come

to earth. Kent's emergency device was automatically timedt andt regulatedt for mosdt of the journey. Neutralizing-g the moon's gravity andt employing an accelerating attachmendt to hasten-n the speedt of my fall away from the moon, idt was also equippedt with brakes-s to check the speedt of my passage when earth's gravity began-n to pull. I usedt Kent's insulation-n, foodt andt drink supplies-s andt equipmendt, andt the breathing-g apparatus Kent hadt usedt, since our moon-n equipmendt is too bulky to fiddt into the tube.

"On my back I carried an airplane parachute. My arrival occurredt late adt night. When I foundt myself suddenly free of the tube, I pulledt the parachute ring andt fell, uninjuredt, on the prairie a little way from the wreck of the laboratory.

"The wreck servedt as my landt-mark. I made my way here, after-r ridding-g myself of my impedimenta by burying-g idt safely beneath the débris. I hidt, near your railway station-n, until a train-n came in andt discharged a few passengers-s. A few of your citizens-s, too, were on the platform. I mingledt with them, and asked about lodgings. I restedt, for-r a week, in my rooms-s, working-g intermittently on an apparatus for communication-n with Kro-del-tsar.

"Soon-n I calledt on Dr. Wilson-n. From him andt others I learnedt of the fate of Garth Gremillion-n. The rest you know.

"**I** HAF nothin-ng budt goodt will andt sympathy for both of the young inventors-s, as I am sure you will understandt. I haf done my feeble best to minimize the hazardt the broken-n tube creates-s for your air traffic, andt to understandt andt sympathize with your ways-s andt your probelms-s. Budt, I musdt confess, I remain-n bewilderedt."

"At least, let us hear your proposal, Kurokin," Justin Holmes demanded, pleasantly but firmly.

"I call it a blamed high-handed proceeding, detaining Kent," Thaddeus Champion interposed.

Kurokin wagged his head.

"This-s conference has a strangely unofficial-l aspectt," he protested. "Still-l, I proceedt.

"Zhentlemen, firsdtt I ask you to consider-r the desperadte case of the moon people.

"Our spiridt of adventure has diminishedt with our developmendt of ways-s to better-r our environmendt. Your earth is our nearestt neighbor, a young-g planedt, from the standpoint of life andt developmendt of civilization-n. Idt has thousandts of centuries of progress-s ahead of idt before it cools-s, as our Kro-del-tsar had already done.

"We dare nott seek interplanetary traffic with the more inaccessible planedtts. Our courage is nott greatt enough, now. Yedt we musdt findt a new home. Our-r numbers-s grow less-s each century.

"Our-r legs-s haf shrunk andt our heads-s andt arms-s haf grown-n oudt of proportion-n to our bodies-s as our use of mechanical transportation-n has supplantedt walking-g, andt as our concentration-n on brain-n work andt sports-s utilizing-g the mindt andt hands haf exercisedt some muscles while leafing others-s idle."

"Good thing we've got tennis and golf," Thaddeus Champion interrupted.

"Evolution will make short work of tennis and golf," Kuropin replied sententiously, "unless there should be, before the earth people, an ever-presentt and heedett example.

"We moon people couldt only guess where our-r cherishedt mechanical progress-s was leading us. Still, we fought hardt for our legs.

"We know, vaguely, the value of active sports. Budt limitedt space, as we were forcedt to burrow deeper-a andt deeper-r, lefdt no room for golf links-s andt tennis courdt. We knew the value of natural foodts. Budt we hadt no space andt no facilities-s for agriculture, undergroundt. Long-g before my time, my ancestors-s were living on artificial foodts. As I am now, so will earth man be in, perhaps, twentdy or thirtdy thousandt years-s, or musdt haf become, exceptdt for the accidendt of a visitor-r from an older world, to pointd in whadt direction-n you are drifting."

THE dwarf lifted, with a finger, his enormous upper lip. For the first time the sky-peers and their fellow townsmen saw the reason for the moon man's thickened, difficult enunciation.

Kurokin had no teeth.

Erika shuddered. Champion grunted. Professor Lemmon nodded cheerfully, evidently pleased at the confirmation of a previously entertained suspicion. The dwarf, somberly overcast by the occasion's import to his people, went on.

"We of Kro-del-tsar number-r only two millions-s of souls-s. All are culturedt, intelligendt, highly trainedt citizens-s. On your planedt, Mason Kent has assuredt me, are hundredts of thousandts of waste acres-s of landt, needing-g only skilledt conditioning-g. Thadt, our ages-s of battle with natural-l hardships-s would make easy for us. The worsdt earth couldt offer wouldt gif us a homelandt far better-r than any we can hope for on our deadt sphere.

"Earth's modst aridt deserdt wouldt be a paradise to us of Kro-del-tsar. In-n the United States-s, I haf learnedt, are mountains-s of rocks-s, andt undevelopedt deserts-s which we couldt reclaim adt no deprivation-n of your own-n people.

"I understandt you haf more landt,

more foodt, more industrial-l supplies-s than-n you can buy from the producers-s; more than you can-n utilize.

"I understandt you haf people starfing from too much plendty; thadt you haf economic disturbances-s recurring needlessly every few years-s. I understandt you haf dissensions-s between-n governmentts, wars-s, bank failures-s, confusing-g puzzles-s on all sides-s.

"You haf saidt, Colonel Holmes-s, thadt you haf the power to lay my plea before the worldt by way of the press-s. You say, Dr. Wilson-n, you haf friendts in high places-s, andt thadt you can lay my proposal before your governmentt. You say, Professor Lemmon, andt you, the honoredt Mr. Ferguson-n, thadt you can carry my message for me as from moon scientisdt to earth sciendisds.

"Zhentlemen, tell them this:

"In exchange for the permission-n to come peacefully to your earth in search of a home that will deprive no one, on landt that is now wasdte, we of Kro-del-tsar will bring-g you the wisdom of twenty thousandt years-s of progress-s. We will show your national-l leaders-s, your world leaders-s, how to blendt into one peaceful-l government all the wisdom of your many nations-s, andt how to discardt the folly of all.

"We will show you the way to abolish dissension-n andt how to combine worldt interesdt andt self-interesdt, so no money shortages-s, no starvation-n, no wandt in the midst of plenty, can occur.

"We will show you how to profit by our mistakes-s, as well as by our progress-s.

"EARTH man is headedt for disaster, physically andt mentally, zhentlemen, unless-s he takes-s warning-g. Your individual ambitions-s andt desires-s andt ethics are goodt; yedt you cannodt, now, insure thadt your

wishes-s are carriedt out in your many disassociatedt governmentdts.

"Long ago we of Kro-del-tsar passedt thadt dangerous stage. You of earth will nodt cope with it successfully as you are now progressing. Your evolutionary develepmendt mightd well be towardt perfection-n. We can show you how, with your better planetary conditions, to escape the errors-s forcedt upon us. Certainly we can help you lengthen your life span-n. Even-n with our low vitality, we of Kro-del-tsar know the secretd of preserving-g youth. By your earth time reckoning-g, I myself am three hundredt years-s oldt."

Professor Lemmon exclaimed, involuntarily. The dwarf signalled for silence.

"We ask little," he pleaded. "We will gif much. We will pledge ourselves to be wholly unselfish in our dealings-s with you in return for the priceless-s boon-n of life andt an atmosphere to lif it in.

"Zhentlemen-n, thadt is my message. Will you delifer it?"

Beads of sweat stood out on the massive forehead of the moon man. He faced Justin Holmes, Dr. Wilson and Professor Lemmon, in turn, with an eloquent gesture of his shoulders and his great, muscular hands. His black eyes were tortured with earnestness. Suddenly his heavy face seemed to glow.

"You will!" he cried, although none had spoken. He looked at Thaddeus Champion.

"You, alone, are unfriendly to me?" he said. "Why?"

Pop Ferguson shook his white head warningly. But the moon man persisted. "Why, Mayor Champion-n?" he repeated.

"Many an apple looks O. K., until you bite off a chunk and find a worm in it," Thaddeus Champion answered, truculently.

Justin Holmes gave the interruption no recognition. He turned to Dr. Wilson and Professor Lemmon. They, with Pop Ferguson, rose. All held out their hands, in turn, to Kurokin. The interplanetary agreement, in its tentative state, was sealed with handshakes. The meeting adjourned.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY the next day Justin Holmes fired his initial barrage. He demanded a new trial for Garth Gremillion. The district attorney, ready to embark on his third campaign for re-election, found himself between the horns of a dilemma. The Gremillion conviction had been popular, yet the prosecutor was too wise to underestimate the good will of the politically active '*Championville Enterprise*.'

He manufactured delays, and the courts seemed all too ready to assist him, granting new postponements on every motion.

Dr. Wilson left for Washington. True Dolman, unsuccessful in an attempt to gain the freedom of Kurokin's rooms in the hope of opening short wave communication with Mason Kent in his banishment, rounded up promising radio experimenters on the chance of finding one who could duplicate the short wave achievements of Kent and Gremillion.

Thaddeus Champion proposed a plan for setting a guard on Kurokin's apartment. Erika protested, to her father's surprise and irritation.

"What ails you and Holmes and young Dolman?" the mayor demanded. "Have you all gone soft on that midget?"

Erika shook her head.

"True says we haven't the slightest chance to do anything whatever without Mr. Kurokin's knowledge," she said. "Look how he read your thoughts at the Sky-peepers' meeting. We must not

antagonize him. He won't let True come into his rooms, but he has promised to show me some wonderful pictures he has, tapestries or something. That may be our opportunity to find out what he's working on. If we spy on him with detectives, he may be dangerous."

"The only danger is that he'll turn out to be a fake and make monkeys of us all," Champion replied, truculently. "Don't go there, mind, without letting me or Dolman know about it." Erika promised.

As a matter of fact, Kurokin's complete withdrawal from his Championville contacts had become an affair of concern to others than Dolman and Erika. His importance as a witness in the events of the successful reopening of the Gremillion trial, coupled with the artificial delays which constantly moved the date of the new hearing farther away, resulted in the calling of the Skypoopers together for a consultation. Justin Holmes had urged the necessity for a frank discussion of plans.

"I've about decided to shoot the works," the publisher said, his haggard face showing the strain he had undergone. "If we had Gremillion to help us, we could get interplanetary messages from Kent which would insure his friends' exoneration. But, without the help of Kent, it looks like we are going to have an uphill battle to free Gremillion even temporarily. It's a vicious circle.

"Undoubtedly Kurokin is in communication with Kro-del-tsar. My general assignment-man, Dolman, has a distinct impression that, if we don't get action at this end soon, there may be an invasion from the moon. They won't attempt that, of course, knowing they are overpoweringly out-numbered, unless they have exceptional means of destruction, which they may well have.

"This is a bad time for the kind of announcement we would have to make in order to bring nation-wide attention to a focus on our situation here in Championville. But it is a much worse time for hostile invasion from another planet made by people farther along in invention than we are."

"KUROKIN knows we interpreted the activities on the moon as due to civil war between forces on that planet," Professor Lemmon said. "But we know now that moon men are supposed to be thousands of years beyond internal warfare. Yet Kurokin made no offer to explain those giant guns we saw, even though he was pretending to be so frank."

Justin Holmes struck one fist into the other hand.

"And we let him becloud an issue so significant!" he exclaimed. "Gentlemen, what do you think? Is it safe to broadcast Kurokin's message accepting it in good faith? Professor Lemmon's reminder has undermined my belief a little."

"I never had any," Thaddeus Champion disclaimed, dryly.

Professor Lemmon spoke up, earnestly.

"I believe the moon dwellers are sincere, so long as we remain so," he said. "I interpret the preparations on the moon, which, by the way, are still visible, as emergency devices for use only if we refuse to treat peaceably with Kurokin."

"But that's the crassest kind of coercion," protested Mayor Champion.

"They are in desperate straits, and they have made us a fair proposal," Professor Lemmon countered.

"What is the decision, gentlemen? Shall I explode the bombshell by releasing the whole story?"

Thaddeus Champion frowned.

"Has anybody heard from Dr. Wilson?" he asked.

The publisher answered.

"The Washington officials are determined to have none of Kurokin," he writes me. "They are sure he is a hoax. Dr. Wilson is discouraged about the outlook, especially since his insistence that his findings with regard to activity on the moon be checked has been met with a baffling indifference. He thinks London and Paris may be in with Washington on a tacit compact to keep silent about this activity, until more is known about its causes. Meanwhile his superiors are discouraging Dr. Wilson's return to Championville, which may indicate that they are not finding his statements so unworthy of attention as they would have him believe. They can't be blamed for caution, you know. We realized, ourselves, the danger implied in a thoughtless exposé of a situation inherently alarming. Dr. Wilson's lips are sealed, now, until he is given the word to speak.

"I, however, have the freedom of the press to lean back on, if necessary. We know more surely every day that drastic action is going to be necessary. We will have to arouse public spirit before we can take the purely preliminary step of freeing Gremillion. The minute we can have Gremillion's help, we can substantiate everything.

"PUBLIC opinion would advocate the acceptance of Kurokin's proposal if people can be convinced that he is not an imposter. The situation has every element of human appeal. It would be a good thing, in many ways, if we could give the people a common earth-wide interest to take their minds off their economic troubles and set them trying to solve the troubles of others."

"What do you say, Jed?" Pop Ferguson asked the local blacksmith, a

valued member of the Sky-peepers, who preferred shoeing horses to turning garage-keeper, because the older trade gave him leisure for his hobbies.

"I'd like to see the fun commence," Jed answered, heartily.

"Professor Lemmon?"

"Voting aye."

"Doctor Diehl?"

"Let 'er rip," said the physician, succinctly.

"Colonel?"

"I have no voting power, not being a member," the publisher said. "But I'll sleep to-night for the first time, and probably the last, in many weeks if we make this decision unanimous."

"Thad?"

"Personally, I'd like to see them put Kurokin in the booby-hatch when they open the door to take Gremillion out," the mayor growled. "But put me down for the affirmative, Pop. We might as well all be fools together and be sociable."

Justin Holmes rose.

"Dolman," he said to the reporter, who had silently listened to the proceedings, "is the story ready to go?"

"Yes, sir," Dolman answered, enthusiastically.

"Then file the local draft with Billings, and have him get out an extra big enough to cover Championville, Brooker, Harpersburg and the State Capital. Have twenty thousand copies ready in time to make the mail plane. File the skeletonized wire version with the Press Associations, and also prepare a statement for the cables. Stand by to answer all queries. I'll be at my desk within the next fifteen minutes. Get going. Send Bentley to Kurokin's apartment to take flashlights."

Dolman chuckled gleefully.

"I had Bentley snap Kurokin on the quiet two weeks ago," he gloated. "But I'll tell him to photograph the apartment,

if he can crash it. It's enough to give the natives' the creeps in Timbuctoo!" The door closed behind him.

THE newspaper headlines of the world went mad. The circulation of the *'Enterprise'* grew like forest fires as hordes of the curious, attracted by the presence of the moon man in Championville, came in trains and trucks, airplanes and broken down cars to camp in tents on the grassy plateau. A mob stormed the Brooker asylum and demanded the release of the young scientist, Gremillion. They did not find him. Harrassed authorities insisted, even to the enraged Sky-peepers, that he had been spirited away to safety, reminding them that two years earlier a mob had been quite as anxious to lynch Gremillion as this mob professed itself to be eager to acclaim him. They made vague promises to produce him when the hysteria died down. His sanity, they pointed out, was as yet unestablished. Later, if proved sane, he could be released on court order providing the suspicion of killing had been set aside meanwhile.

Kurokin emerged from his shell and endured the curiosity seekers for a while, realizing the advisability of having the public on his side. But he finally protested that he could endure the strain no longer, and took refuge in his apartment as before, triumphant in his determination to admit to his rooms not even the men sworn to forward his earth mission.

All over the country "Moon Immigration Clubs" formed, resolving to invite the dwellers on Kro-del-tsar to come to this, to that, to the other haven. Few of these organizations owned or controlled the territory they offered.

The press alternatively welcomed and deplored the hysterical public reaction to the biggest feature story of the cen-

tury. Many editors and economists advocated Congressional intervention, suggesting the turning over of government reservations to the moon people. Alarmists were upset by the delay of positive action.

'The Championville Enterprise' was concerned chiefly with its own honest indignation regarding the disappearance of Garth Gremillion and the failure of the courts to lift sentence, allowing him, when found, the freedom to turn his inventive skill to the aid of his friend, Mason Kent.

A development occurred without warning which convinced True Dolman that affairs were about to be forced to a climax. He called for Erika Champion, during his dinner-leave one evening, and took her to an Italian restaurant in the block of small business buildings off Main Street. Over the spaghetti he said:

"The Colonel is trying to verify a rumor that Soviet Russia has offered Siberia to the moon dwellers for exclusive rights to all assistance that the Kro-del-tsar inventors and economists can offer.

"That means, of course, that Russia would control all discoveries perfected by the moon people from the time of settlement on, as well as having tremendous advantage of the thousands of years' progress already made by the Kro-rel-tsar scientists beyond our own scientific development.

"IMAGINE what a deal like that I would mean to us and to Europe! Forced world domination by one nation by means of attack and confiscation instead of the Utopian world amalgamation described by Kurokin! Has the moon man said anything more about showing you his tapestries?"

Erika shook her head.

"Make sure you notify me, day, hour

and minute, before you go," said Dolman.

"Why?"

"Just because I'll feel a lot better if you'll promise."

"No matter how busy you may be?"

"No matter how hard it is to get hold of me, or what they tell you I'm doing. Did he make his invitation specific for any definite day?"

"He said he'd telephone."

"All right. The minute the message comes through, get in touch with me."

"True, your forehead's wet with perspiration and your hands are shaking!" Erika watched her escort anxiously. "What on earth are you bothered about?"

"Gosh, I wish I knew," the reporter answered, feverishly. "This thing is getting out of hand. Kurokin's up to something, and he's gotten so secretive about his movements that there's no checking them. I know he's spent a good deal of time on Needles Mountain lately, and that he's had a lot of work done on his flat, but what he is planning, I can't find out. There are so many strangers around, now, with all this crowd of curiosity seekers, that it is impossible to keep tab on workmen. No local man had charge of the work; I've called on them all and I'm sure they weren't holding out anything."

The newspaper man wiped his forehead with a hand that trembled. He paid the check and took Erika home. During the next few weeks, except for an occasional anxious inquiry as to whether the moon man had telephoned, he hardly communicated with her. Day and night he pursued every lead in his efforts to find Gremillion, to surprise Kurokin's secret and to open short wave communication with Kent.

The rumored Russian Soviet offer was slow in materializing or developing to official status, or it was being kept

carefully under cover. Kurokin, his smouldering eyes curtained by the opaque secretive shadow that the Sky-peepers had come to know familiarly, declined to explain his frequent visiting of Needles Mountain. Dolman suspected that his time there was spent in observation of the dwarf's own people and probably in communication with them, but found no way to confirm his suspicions.

Suddenly Congress did an unprecedented thing. It put to a great national referendum the problem of whether the Mojave Desert should be indemnified, turned into a government reservation and given over to the use of the moon people in return for their aid in organizing an equitable and voluntary world government.

The public reaction to this proposition, coming without warning from the conservative party in power at Washington, took on many of the characteristics of incipient revolution. A great army of protesting citizens marched to Washington, demanding a hearing and the immediate withdrawal of the referendum. Women organized into indignant groups, powerful in voting strength, urging their sister women to vote down the measure, denouncing it as a threat of the domination of civilization by a race of mis-shapen monstrosities.

THE dwarf Kurokin watched the gathering storm silently, with a growing wonder in the black eyes overtopped by his bulging forehead and shaggy brows. His continued silence concerning the activities on Krodeltsar and his refusal to help Dolman communicate with Kent, held as a hostage by the moon dwellers, incurred the resentment of Justin Holmes, who bade fair to turn from a powerful ally into an enemy of the moon-earth amalgamation plan. Already the publisher regretted

his too-sudden announcement of the moon-man's presence in Championville, and earnestly sought to repair the damage by urging the excitement seekers to return to their homes and await developments.

The crowd hysteria had paralyzed business in Championville, turning the formerly peaceful, somewhat scholarly community into a community frantically struggling to feed an unwanted mob on emergency rations. Conditions were rapidly approximating those accompanying devastating flood or earthquake.

True Dolman, haggard from lack of sleep but still retaining some vestige of his formerly, unquenchable enthusiasm, came into the publisher's office toward the close of a grueling day throughout which crowds had mobbed the 'Enterprise' office trying to verify a rumor that Kurokin had been kidnaped by foreign spies.

"I've been having another session with the authorities at Brooker Asylum," the reporter told his chief. "I'm convinced of something I suspected several days ago. Colonel Holmes, I don't believe Gremillion was spirited away, I believe he escaped!"

"Locked in a 'violent' cell, with two big guards on duty day and night?"

"I know it looks impossible, Chief. But he may have had expert help from outside. The people of Kro-del-tsar understand and use dimensions outside our calculations. Dr. Wilson tried to explain some of Kurokin's figures to me to-day. They're beyond me. But Gremillion's a bright lad, himself, and he had the advantage of years of association with an admitted genius. I think he's at liberty, and I know—we all know—that, if that's the fact, he can't be far away. We've already checked all outgoing transportation in our efforts to find out where the asylum people took him.

"It's worth trying," the publisher as-

sented, thoughtfully. "What makes you think he could be concealed near Championville?"

"Near Championville or in Championville," the reporter answered. "It seems to me he could manage it even if he were dumber than normal, instead of being a good deal brighter than the average man. There are two places where he could hide and we'd never give him a tumble, and neither would his keepers. One place is in that crowded, shifting tourist camp out on the plateau. One more stranger wouldn't mean a thing out there, Chief."

"Dolman, I believe you're right!"

"The other place, and I'm inclined to believe it's a little less likely, is in Kurokin's flat. Kurokin has refused to let visitors in for some time, now, yet he took me up there without hesitation the night he revealed his identity. There's something there he wants to keep hidden. Mightn't it be Garth?"

The publisher considered thoughtfully.

"Take the two possibilities one at a time," he instructed Dolman. "The plateau will be more tedious, but easier, in a way, because Kurokin's flat can't be entered without over-riding his own serious objections. He called me by telephone not long ago, about half an hour before you came in. He wanted me to ask Washington to recall the referendum."

"Did he say why?"

"Said he feared internal warfare. I told him I'd send the government representatives—more are arriving on every train, now that things are getting so hot—to talk with him, and he said to postpone that until he called again. Another detachment of militia arrived this morning."

"If I find Gremillion, what shall I do with him?"

"Bring him here in a closed taxi, and be sure nobody finds out who he is.

We'll keep him under cover until we can get him a court release as quietly as possible. Even Hammond, the prosecutor, is willing to listen to reason since that mob demonstration a couple of weeks ago, and Judge Briggs will put it through in a rush if we can only substantiate, to his satisfaction, the fact that Kent is alive. He thinks Kurokin's a fake, you know. But Gremillion can open connections with Kro-del-tsar, if Kent's captors there will let him communicate."

THE reporter took his hat from the floor beside the chair he had occupied.

"I'll get going," he said. "Chief, I'd like to ask a big favor. I can't leave it to anyone else and be sure I'm not taking chances of causing a riot. Kurokin, in spite of his closed door policy, has promised Mayor Champion's daughter, Erika, that he'll let her see his flat. He's got some remarkable things there—tapestries, she calls them. I think they're something more than that, but, anyhow, he's promised to telephone her when to come up there and look at them.

"It's hardly safe, in a way, because, with that mind-reading stunt of his, he'll know she's looking around for anything that will be of use to us, and yet I've always had confidence that Kurokin means well, so long as we're on the level with him. Erika is determined to go, and her father is for it, realizing that she is the only one able to get in there without guns and a search-warrant, but I've made her promise to let me know so I can go with her. If Kurokin won't admit us both, then she's not to go in. She didn't want to promise, because she's wild to see the place, since he's made such a mystery of it, but she did agree to let me know the minute he telephones.

"I may be all night, and maybe most of to-morrow, on the plateau trying to smoke out Gremillion. I'm the logical one to go, because I know him and because he'll probably trust me enough to come back with me. But I'd like to feel sure that someone I can trust is watching out for a call from Miss Champion, someone who could sell her on the necessity for taking an escort with her, and someone who would have a chance to get inside once he got there."

Colonel Holmes laughed.

"All right, boy," he consented. "We'll call this a reversed assignment, handed a publisher by one of his reporters, and I'll promise you I won't fall down on the job. Trot along; I'll stand by."

Dolman held out his hand, smiling boyishly.

"That—that's swell, sir!" he acknowledged. The next minute the reporter was gone, and the publisher was giving instructions to the switchboard girl to relay to his office any message for True Dolman.

Except for the milling mob always present, of late, outside the newspaper plant, waiting for the slightest change in developments as posted on the 'Enterprise' bulletin board, the early part of the evening was quiet. Once the publisher heard a tap on his office door and admitted Peters, in charge of Dolman's work for the night.

"Here is something True asked me to run down for him," Peters said, handing Colonel Holmes a scribbled notation taken off the records of the Brooker Fire Department. "Two weeks ago an alarm came from the insane asylum, but they had the blaze out before the fire trucks arrived. The Asylum Superintendent made it a point to request complete silence about the call, so far as the official records go, and the Brooker papers and our correspondent were told it was a false

alarm. Dolman got wind of it somehow, and tracked it down, and the fire occurred between the last time anyone is known to have visited Gremillion at the asylum and the night the authorities reported to you and Mayor Champion that they had hidden Gremillion away for safety. What I've just been on was this: the fire broke out on the second story in the wing where Gremillion's cell was located, and there is fresh paint as well as other evidence of repairs outside the wall just about where his cell would be, as nearly as I could judge from the window count."

The publisher stuck the notation on a spindle.

"Good work, Pete," he commented. "It begins to look as if Dolman may be right."

THE telephone rang insistently and the colonel nodded dismissal. As Peters went out the bell pealed again.

"Yes?"

"Colonel Holmes," the night operator said, a little breathlessly, "about the call for Mr. Dolman that was to be relayed to you—"

"Yes?" Has it come through?"

"No, Colonel, but I have just found a notation left by the other shift. Someone called Mr. Dolman just before the other girl went off duty, leaving no name, only a number. I checked the number by the directory, and it's the Champion residence. But nobody there answers. It looks as if the call you are waiting for may have come through. I see a duplicate of the notation on Mr. Dolman's desk. He usually throws them away after he calls a number, so there is the chance he didn't find the message. Perhaps I shouldn't have bothered you—"

"You were entirely right to let me know." The publisher was out of his office, hat on and coat over his arm,

before the switchboard girl had disconnected.

He pushed his way through the restless crowd outside the office and drove to Kurokin's flat. The place was brightly lighted. Two militiamen wandered up and down in front of the restaurant, which had its usual evening crowd.

"Has anyone gone in or out of the Kurokin flat?" the publisher asked the men.

"A young lady went up awhile ago," one answered. "We've been watching for her to come out that door any minute. She asked us to come up and rap if she stayed longer than three quarters of an hour, and to send up a man from the '*Enterprise*' if he happened along."

Justin Holmes nodded.

"I'm from the '*Enterprise*,' he assured the militiamen. "Stand by, will you? If I call, or you hear any noise up above here, run up and lend a hand."

The stairway, usually dark, was lighted by a beam reaching from the slightly opened door of Kurokin's apartment. The publisher pushed the door wide, without knocking. The room was empty.

Its very bareness seemed to preclude the possibility that anyone could be hidden there, yet Justin Holmes lifted his cane and prodded the walls between, above and below the panels for springs or concealed openings,

Suddenly one of the metallic figures on the large panel moved under the exploring end of the publisher's cane. Startled, Justin Holmes withdrew the pressure. The figure, however, kept moving. Other figures like it, swathed and hooded and not unlike deepsea divers in uniform, moved into the picture from the left. In the lower right corner, the mouth of a gun-cylinder came into view. The figures ran, pointing, crowded around the cylinder and tapped it inquiringly, turning their heads to listen.

Then they faced each other and bowed, or swayed forward from the waist, as if in affirmation. Then they unclamped the end of the cylinder and removed from it a cap of metal, handling it as if it were thistledown. They upended this, and unfastened its lining. From within the cap emerged, slowly and stiffly, a figure.

SUDDENLY the picture flickered and died, leaving the black screen in total blankness. Then a green phosphorescent light began to play against the black, and soon the entire background glowed. Against the brightness dark shadows flickered, cleared, changed to outlines. The same figures reappeared and began moving down what seemed to be a weirdly lighted corridor. Crowds of people like them lined the walls and crowded behind them, small as midgits and wearing no uniforms.

The man who had emerged from the cylinder was seated on a seven-sided stool of metal, while the hooded figures who had helped him from the cylinder removed his wrappings. A goggle-eyed helmet with a set of tubes depending from it was lifted from his head.

The man was Kurokin.

Shaken with the import of this discovery, the publisher turned and stared about him. Only that afternoon he had talked by telephone with the moon man, heard his request that the Federal Government be asked to recall its referendum and his later request for delay in being brought into consultation with the Federal representatives who had arrived in Championville. Now, by some bewildering chance, Kurokin was back on Kro-del-tsar, surrounded by many other moon dwellers, too like him in size and features to be mistaken for dwellers of any other sphere.

He looked at the other "tapestries." They looked, as they had looked to True

Dolman, like pictures embroidered on velvet with metallic thread of a clear, cold brilliancy. They were static, and no prodding with the cane caused movement of the figures they portrayed.

The publisher tried the walls again for openings. There seemed to be only the single door, the one, still ajar, leading into the hall. Yet Erika Champion had come here, less than an hour before, and the militiamen had not seen her leave, nor had they reported the exit of the moon man.

Justin Holmes made a quick decision. He would find Kurokin's telephone, get a flash through to the 'Enterprise' concerning the return of the moon man to Kro-del-tsar, and notify the police and Mayor Champion about the apparent disappearance of Erika. Then he would send someone to the plateau to locate Dolman and relieve him so the reporter could join him in the search for the girl. Even though the pair were much more pals than sweethearts, the publisher knew his general assignment man would blame himself freely for having encouraged the visit to Kurokin's apartment and for any misfortune that had resulted from the rash undertaking.

AGAIN the bareness of the room proved baffling. Simply and irrefutably, no telephone was in sight. Yet Justin Holmes knew the moon man had called and had received telephone calls several times during his stay in Championville. And the calls were direct, not relayed from the restaurant downstairs. Without doubt, then, there must be concealed openings somewhere.

One by one he tried the panels, first with the cane, then pushing at their edges with his entire weight. At last a corner panel gave. Its movement was so sudden the publisher was thrown off his balance. Clutching at its edge he righted himself and stood clear as

the panel swung into the wall, presenting a concave face to the room. In the recess provided by its concavity a chair and shelf stood. On the shelf was a telephone flanked by a narrow black box twelve inches wide and twice as high. On the chair was a Championville telephone directory.

Justin Holmes lifted the receiver from its hook, intending to call for the 'Enterprise' office. To his astonishment the telephone swung from his grasp and lowered its transmitter to a round opening in the black box beside it. The black box spoke.

"Yes?" it demanded pleasantly.

The voice of the black box was the voice of Kurokin.

In a flash of understanding Justin Holmes replaced the receiver and opened the lid of the box. Several phonograph records were inside, along with a sound box, a timing arrangement, and an electrically energized regulator to move this record or that under the needle attached to the reproducing apparatus. The black box was a miniature, compact reproduction of that marvel of earth science, Mr. Televox, duplicating the mechanical-man-telephone in all but form and counterfeit human features.

The publisher pressed a tiny button beside one of the code notations on the regulator. Automatically the receiver of the telephone was lifted and set on the shelf. A record swung into place.

"Yes?" said the black box.

"Yes, this is-s Mr. Kurokin-n. I am sorry, my friendt, but I cannodt be disturbedt. My decision is-s irrevocable; I regredt to haf to tell you. Goodt bye."

The receiver was replaced.

Justin Holmes thought a minute, remembered the undelivered message that had come through for True Dolman just before six o'clock, when the switch-

board girls were changing shifts, and began moving the hands on the timing piece back to fifteen minutes of six. For several minutes, by the tick of the time-piece and by the faster tick of his own watch, nothing happened. Then the black box reached forth a metallic arm and removed the telephone receiver, as before, but without any outside pressure on any part of its mechanism, such as Justin Holmes had supplied a few minutes before.

The box spoke gently.

"Cedar Four-Eleven-n?"

Silence for a brief interval.

"May I speak to Miss-s Champion-n?"

Another interval. "This-s is Kurokin-n, Miss-s Champion-n. From now until eighdt o'clock I will be adt liberty to show you aboutt if you care to see my pictures-s." Another interval. Then the black box said, courteously, "I thank you. Goodt bye."

Early, harmless hours for viewing a few tapestries and having a cup of tea, yet Erika had come, unsuspecting the mechanical nature of the invitation, and had gone—where?"

HASTILY the publisher disconnected the telephone from the black box and put in his delayed call to the 'Enterprise.' Rapidly he sketched in the momentous facts of the departure of Kurokin from his earth dwelling and his safe return, alone, to Kro-del-tsar. He touched, somewhat guardedly, on the possibility of Erika Champion's disappearance and described the mechanical telephone contrivance which had allowed Kurokin several days' absence without detection of his departure by anything short of invasion of his lodgings. Then he lifted the directory to find the Mayor's telephone number and notify him before calling for the assistance of the sheriff and the Brooker police.

A sense of instability halted him,

and he looked down at his feet. When the panel had given with the pressure he had brought to bear on it, he had lost his balance and stumbled. Evidently he had stepped on a spring releasing a section of the floor, which had formed itself into a sharp incline. Unknowingly he had stood, for several careless and preoccupied minutes, on the brink of a chute leading to some unknown abyss beneath the building. No wonder Dolman had spoken of extensive and mysterious alterations inside the dwelling of Kurokin! Small wonder, as well, that the dwarf had steadfastly refused access to his apartment in spite of Dolman's frequent pleadings for admittance!

Justin Holmes reached for additional support. His hand found the frame of the great, front screen where he had witnessed the arrival of Kurokin on the moon. He glanced at the screen and saw the figures, still in the weirdly lighted underground passage, milling about in great consternation. Someone had broken unwelcome news to Kurokin. Now he was telling his fellow Kro-deltar dwellers news in return, which was like a sentence of death to them. Their words were unintelligible, but their thoughts were clear, as were their gestures.

"Telepathic television," the publisher interpreted, half aloud.

Others arrived, now, and those in the foreground of the picture gave way before them. In the lead was a moon man nearly as tall as Kurokin, whereas the others had all been from six inches to a foot smaller. His face was kindly, his eyes gray. His white hair was thick instead of black and scanty, like Kurokin's, and his powerful figure was fairly well proportioned. He spoke soothingly, and, while his message was less plain to Justin Holmes than the excited grief of the others had been, it conveyed the

unmistakable impression that Kurokin's news had been no surprise to the speaker and that he was prepared to deal with it and to reassure the people of Kro-deltar that their despair would be ameliorated.

"The Ruler of the moon-dwellers," the publisher told himself, admiringly.

A slight giving of the boards beneath his feet again reminded Justin Holmes of his insecure footing. He braced himself, intending to edge along the margin and walk around the incline to safety, when a wisp of chiffon handkerchief, caught in the swan-marked edge of the severed block of flooring, caught his eye. It was blue, a color inescapably associated with the clothing consistently worn by Erika Champion, even by one to whom she was known as slightly as the publisher of the *'Enterprise.'*

With a brief ejaculation, the publisher caught the edge of the concave panel and stooped to retrieve the handkerchief. The panel swung outward at his touch. With a shout for help Justin Holmes catapulted down into darkness.

CHAPTER VII

JUSTIN HOLMES' ears rang with the speed of his induction along a dark tube barely large enough to accommodate the passage of his body.

His fall was so rapid at first that he lost the sense of direction, but, somewhat abruptly, he sensed a change as if after the first hundred feet or so he began shooting along on a level. Face upward, feet first, he seemed sucked along at a speed that took his breath.

Suddenly something seized his feet and hauled him upright, ignominiously head down, and stretched him in cool fresh grass.

Dazed, he looked around and into a

pair of inquiring gray eyes topped by a shock of red hair. His brain was clearing rapidly. He sat up dizzily.

"THAT'S a bit better, Colonel," said the redhead in a rich brogue-twisted barytone.

At the voice latent memory stirred.

"You're Garth Gremillion, aren't you?" the publisher asked, shakily.

"In person," his rescuer admitted.

"Look above you, sir. Great doings!"

"Very well, in a minute," Justin Holmes promised, still a trifle tremulously. "Where are we and what are all these people doing here?"

"You slipped into a little trap of Kurokin's and arrived here on the plateau near the old laboratory wreck, by way of an organo-metal tube," Gremillion answered. "By luck I was standing on the cap of it, watching the doings up above, and I felt the tube vibrating. So I yanked the cap off, which took some doing, and here you are in time for some fun, along with half the population of Brooker county. Again I'm telling you, Colonel, look above you."

Justin Holmes obeyed.

High in the air over the torn meadow where the laboratory explosion caused by this same Garth Gremillion had left a scar, now grassgrown, a beam from a ray lamp played with an intolerable brilliance on something protruding from the sky. An airplane jockeyed about, circling in a beat just below the end of the cylindrical projection. A man, riding the plane's top wing like a circus-stunter groped with both hands for the cylinder's end.

"Who is that?" the publisher asked, puzzled by something familiar in the appearance of the stunt man.

"It's Dolman of your paper and a pilot and mechanic from the airport."

"Is that the earth end of your vacuum tube?"

Gremillion nodded.

"Who is inside it?"

"We ought to know in about two shakes, Colonel, if Dolman can keep his balance long enough to release the vacuum. It's a risky business." Suddenly he seized his watch and held it out in a steady palm.

"What's happened now?"

"Dolman's removed the cap," Gremillion explained. "He will take it off, now, at fifteen minute intervals until he hears voices or someone tapping inside the tube. Could you give me a hand, sir?"

"I guess so." The publisher moved after him, stiffly.

"I've a pneumatic mattress here that I've been using in my tent. If the man inside the tube shouldn't have a parachute, we're certainly going to need something soft for him to fall on."

He dragged forth an inflated rubber mattress the size of a single bed.

"We'll put it under the plane for the time being," he said.

"You have no idea who is in there?" the publisher insisted, incredulously.

"I have my guess, Dolman has his. We don't agree. What is yours?"

Justin Holmes moved back to his former post, followed by Gremillion. They watched Dolman, teetering a-top the wing, replace the tube cap and, with difficulty, recover his balance as the plane again resumed its circular path.

"My guess," the publisher said, "is that we are about to see, once more, your adventurous friend, Mason Kent."

At the name Gremillion saluted the sky above the plane. His face was serious.

"That's what I'm hoping myself, sir," he said, fervently.

They watched the ticking off of the minutes.

The swaying figure again removed the cap from the cylinder end revealed by the intolerably brilliant violet light in the sky.

"HOW long?" Justin Holmes asked. "We don't know. Not much longer, maybe. If it's Kent, and he has brakes, we are only delaying him by this precaution of stopping his fall at intervals. Also, he'll probably have a parachute. But Dolman is acting on the chance that Kent's escape may have been too hurried to allow time for complete equipment.

"Then, too, if may not be Kent. If it's someone Kurokin was trying to kidnap, as Dolman suspects, then all the help we can give will be needed. Dolman is taking big chances. He and his pilot have to get clear in less than no time if someone shoots out of that tube while the cap is off."

Justin Holmes had been watching the speaker curiously.

"How did Kurokin get you out of the asylum?" he asked.

Gremillion laughed.

"He found out where I kept my reserve of organo-metal up on Needles Mountain and ran a vacuum tube underground to the asylum gates. Then, at night when no one was about to run into it and get hurt, he ran it on up to my room. He aimed it at the window, but it struck the sill and broke through, making the devil's own racket.

"Naturally it woke the nut who was sleeping with me, besides bringing a guard on the run. I pulled the blind down and stalled off the guard, but my roommate wasn't so easy. I finally got him back to sleep by promising him if he'd pull the covers over his head and go to sleep like a good boy I'd scratch his back, that being his idea of a pleasant evening.

"It was twenty solid minutes, and it

felt like twenty hours, before he began to snore again. The agreement was that I was to tap a signal to Kurokin when I was safely in the tube, but they don't allow us pencils or implements of any kind, you know; not even toothbrushes.

"Inside the tube, I thought about a bridge I wear, with two teeth on it, a souvenir of football. I took it out and tapped 'when', and Kurokin established the vacuum and sucked me up into his flat. I stayed there two days. By that time he had completed the tube you fell into, and had made arrangements for me out here on the plateau where he figured I'd be just one more curiosity-seeking tramp.

"I rigged up a good short wave projector and receiver, and have talked to Mason Kent several times. Lately, however, weather conditions have been bad. To-night I couldn't reach him, but I intercepted a short wave message on Krodelsar telling of his escape several days ago. So I'm hoping to see him again soon, if this stunt of Dolman's turns out right."

"What is Dolman up to now?" the publisher asked.

"Tapping the tube for signals. Quick, grab the mattress."

While they spoke the reporter had tossed the round cap clear of the plane. It drifted in the night air as long as it was visible in the rays from the lamp. The pilot darted away from the tube's mouth and landed. The man in the cockpit kept the violet searchlight trained on the tube.

The next moment a queerly elongated form shot from the cylinder. A kite-shaped sail opened out above it. In a jerky, side-swaying zigzag the figure drifted to earth, falling less than ten yards from the spot where Gremillion and Justin Holmes watched, fascinated.

THE crowd, which had stood in orderly abeyance during Dolman's maneuvers with the cylinder cap, now surged forward.

State militiamen ordered them back. In the crowd the sturdy voice of Jed Hoskins, blacksmith and charter Sky-peeper, shouted to the restless to keep in line.

Justin Holmes approached the form on the grass.

"There are two of them!" he ejaculated.

Dolman and his pilot trained twin beams from their flashlights on the figures at their feet. The larger was struggling to unlock his stiffened feet and knees from their grip beneath the limp arms of the other. The smaller, lighter form rolled free, smothered in the kite-like parachute.

"Look out above!" shouted True Dolman. He seized the figure, parachute and all, and dragged it aside while Gremillion and the publisher hauled the larger arrival, in its awkward insulation wrappings, to safety.

A third form had shot from the mouth of the cylinder.

"The mattress!" Dolman cried. "Move it to the right. This one has no parachute!"

And, indeed, the newcomer seemed to be toppling, deadweight. Dolman and a militiaman had dragged the mattress beneath the falling figure when, belatedly, another kite-shaped parachute opened. The newest arrival plopped and bounded on the inflated rubber, kicking ludicrously.

Already Gremillion, giving no heed to these developments, had loosened the headpiece of the man he had dragged to safety. He lifted the helmet now and a fair curly head emerged.

"Kent!" Gremillion shouted, almost sobbing in his relief. "Gosh, boy, I'm glad to see you."

Mason Kent smiled at his chum before his blue eyes closed wearily.

"That goes double, kid," he murmured. "Get me out of this, will you? About a thousand feet up I met somebody hell-bent for the moon, and coming at me like a shot out of a cannon. I hooked on and brought whoever it was down with me, but I'm completely played out. Get me undone and let me rest."

His widened eyes stared at the limp figure at his feet. He moved the parachute aside.

"Good lord, it's a girl!" he breathed. "How did a girl get in that tube, and what was she doing there without insulation?"

At the words Dolman turned from his struggles with the fastenings of the new arrival's insulation apparel and called to Thaddeus Champion who had struggled to the forefront of the mob.

"It's Erika, sir," he called.

Champion made a sound between a groan and a bellow and leaped for his daughter's side.

"She didn't mind me, sir," the reporter said, plaintively. "I told her long ago not to go near Kurokin's flat without letting me know. Except for the accidental good luck that Kent was on his way down and intercepted her, you'd never have seen her again. She's unconscious, and we're lucky if she isn't injured. Give me something wet, somebody."

A thermos bottle was passed to Dolman. Unceremoniously he chucked its contents into the pale face, which looked childish in the circle cast by his flashlight. A powdering of freckles showed plainly on the tip-tilted nose.

Erika opened her eyes and made a wry little face, smearing with her sleeve in the cold coffee Dolman had doused upon her.

"A swell chance you took!" the reporter scolded her, scowling.

"Oh, let it lay, True," Erika advised, lazily. "I'll get my picture in the '*Enterprise*,' won't I?"

"Attagirl," said an admiring voice beside her.

Erika turned to the voice as if drawn by a magnet. The smiling blue eyes of Mason Kent greeted her with comradely understanding.

"DON'T mind Dolman," he comforted. "Folk like him are only useful for getting real people, like you and me, out of the messes we get into. Let's see if we can move around a little." He extended a hand. Erika scrambled to her feet in her torn and rumpled dress. Her knees shook, and, laughing tremulously in spite of her bravado, she sat down again. Kent sat beside her, oblivious of the crowd.

"I never cared much for girls," he remarked earnestly, making the group around them a present of the statement. "But I think I shall, from now on. After looking at those babies upstairs yonder—" he nodded carelessly at the clouded moon, "you certainly look good to me."

Erika regarded him gravely.

"That's reassuring," she answered, demurely.

Gremillion had gone to lend a hand with the latest arrival.

"Come here, Dolman," he called. "This one has her breath knocked out."

A diminutive figure was sprawled on the rubber mattress, its short legs kicking. The removal of the helmet had revealed a mass of red gold ringlets. Erika was small, scarcely five feet in height, yet this girl's head would have come no higher than her shoulder. While her features were petite and symmetrical, her face had a mask-like quality and her eyes were a luminous green.

Mason Kent too one look and groaned.

"Who is she?" Erika demanded.

Kent scowled.

"She's the only passable looking dame I saw all the time I was on Kro-delta," he whispered. "A kind of throw-back, I guess, to ancestors of a few thousand years ago, when the Moon people were fairly decent looking. She's the daughter of the Kro-delta ruler and has the status of a princess up there. She's got looks, if you like that type, but that lets her out. Perfect dumb-bell. Even her father knows it. He was ready to marry her off to the first visitor from another planet who happened along.

"She's made things plenty hot for me. She's a cousin of Kutokin's, besides being the daughter of the ruler, and is the real reason, I suspect, why Kurokin let them take me prisoner."

Satisfied with the explanation, Erika gave the girl a friendly smile.

"Anyway, True seems to like her looks," she chuckled. "He waked her lots more gently than he did me. At least, he's not dumping cold coffee in her face."

"Won't Kro-les-da be a find for the Sunday supplements?" Kent mused. "I see your father's going over to extend the hospitality of Championville, but Society, with a big S, will probably snatch her away. I'll probably have to clear out, now she's here," he added, suddenly sobered. "I just ditched a promising career on the moon to escape matrimony, and here she is again."

ERIKA eyed the moon beauty approvingly.

"She's sweet, but you don't have to marry her, do you, just because she has followed you down here?"

"N-no," Kent answered, his eyes smiling into Erika's. "I might marry some-

one else. That would be adequate protection. Moon girls don't vamp married men."

"Oh," said Erika, faintly.

"Is there a telephone out here, Dolman?"

"Right here, chief," Dolman answered, deserting the moon princess at the call of duty. "The airplane is equipped with a telephone. The city desk is all set for an extra on the strength of a skeletonized outline I sent in an hour ago."

"Fine!" beamed the publisher. "Give me a quick gist, and I'll relay it. I know Kurokin has left us. I witnessed his moon arrival on his telepathic television screens at his flat. That's already in. I will shoot them a flash on Kent's return to earth and his rescue of Miss Champion, together with a line on the method of her attempted abduction, and we'll go on from that." After speaking crisply into the telephone he turned back to the reporter. "Now, Dolman, have you any idea why Kurokin left so suddenly?"

"I can supply that information. Colonel Holmes," Kent spoke up. "I received all his earth communications and turned them in, confidentially, to the ruler of Kro-del-tsar."

"Most of the telepathic-television screens in Kurokin's apartment were tuned to catch earth thoughts and messages. He got what he believed to be a true picture of the mass mind of the earth's inhabitants. It was a suspicious mind, divided and afraid."

"He decided, finally, that there was no hope whatever for a unified, constructive program of cooperation with Kro-del-tsar for an interplanetary amalgamation."

"Right," said the publisher. "Go on."

"He had freed my friend Gremillion and found safe refuge for him until he deemed it safe to produce him for ac-

quittal of the charge of murder. The money I had given him for his expenses and experiments during his earth visit was about gone, and he had no way of getting more. He meant to return to the moon and persuade me to stay on there. He wanted any help I could give him in improving living conditions on Kro-del-tsar, but, even more important, he wanted to make sure there was no danger of my heading an earth invasion of the moon at some future time. He hoped, too, for a time, that I'd marry some moon girl and spend the rest of my life working with the moon scientists."

The young scientist scowled at the moon princess and then smiled at Erika.

"He soon realized that I was unlikely to fall in with his plan of interplanetary marriage. So he began to hint, as his plans for return took shape, that he would bring me a beautiful earth bride as a further inducement to stay on the moon."

"WHEN I heard that, of course, I realized I must get back home before Kurokin tried to pull off an interspace kidnaping. And I was just in time. Probably, at that, I shouldn't have been able to get equipment and supplies for the journey except for the help of Kro-les-da. It didn't occur to me she planned to tag along." He spoke a few unintelligible words to the moon girl. Their tone was unmistakable. He was telling her what earth men think of girls who pursue them unwanted.

Kro-les-da merely shrugged her shoulders and turned her back to Kent. Erika caught the glimpse of a smile as she turned, but whether the moon princess smiled at Gremillion or True Dolman, Erika was unable to guess. Both, discomfited at the incongruity of a toothless smile in a fair, girlish face, flushed in the glare of the flashlight that Mason

Kent mischievously trained on their defenseless faces.

"How did you find Gremillion, Dolman?" the publisher prompted.

"You remember my theory that he had escaped," the reporter reminded his chief. "I was fairly certain of that before I came out here to look for Garth, and when Peters sent a messenger out to tell me I had guessed right about the location of the asylum fire, I was sure. Gremillion escaped through a vacuum tube supplied by Kurokin, and that the fire was the result of Kurokin's method of destroying the tube. I had no trouble finding Garth Gremillion here tonight. I heard his short wave apparatus in one of the first two dozen tents I visited.

"He was glad to have my help. He had procured a violet ray flare, but had no way to get up to the end of the tube. I requisitioned a plane, and the airport people sent a pilot and a mechanic with it. A crowd gathered and nearly mobbed us. We had to send to Championville for guards to keep them back.

"When we finally took off we found something unexpected. The violet rays showed that the end of the tube had been extended to the ground and connected with a similar tube reaching from here to Kurokin's flat. Garth knew of this underground tube; he had used it for transportation here after his escape.

"Listening, we heard vibration in the organo-metal. Someone was traveling through the underground tube and soon passed on into the tube reaching to the moon.

"I was frantic, because I was sure it was Erika, especially since Garth Gremillion had assured me that Kurokin had already returned to Kro-del-tsar. I telephoned, and the *'Enterprise'* said you had gone to Kurokin's flat to look for Erika. We kept the ray on the tube and found that Kurokin had provided

it with automatic suction caps. These went on, while we watched, as the two sections of vacuum tube separated, closed, and the earth-moon cylinder moved away from us to a height of several hundred feet in the air. We followed it with the plane, and, until I got the combination of a spring Kurokin had constructed, I had the devil's own job getting the cap off the tube.

"Gremillion, here, was expecting Kent to return. At the same time, I was sure Erika was in the tube on her way to the moon. We tried to make the conflicting passage as safe for both as we could by breaking the vacuum pressure at regular intervals."

The reporter broke off and eyed his former pal reprovingly.

"Erika promised to let me know before she went to Kurokin's," he said. "Evidently she broke her promise."

"I DID not," Erika protested. She faced her father, demanding justice. "Dad, you and mother were on your way to pick up people to attend a town-meeting, when Mr. Kurokin called. It was early, right after supper, and I tried my best to telephone True. The switchboard girl said he wasn't there, but she'd see that he got the message. I waited and waited, and he never did call. So I told the soldiers outside Mr. Kurokin's flat to come up for me if I didn't return in a little while, and asked them to send True up the minute he arrived. It's not my fault if he failed to come."

Thaddeus Champion looked at True Dolman, and both shook their heads helplessly. Bystanders laughed. Only Mason Kent shared Erika's injured indignation.

Suddenly there was a shout from the crowd. High in the air above the meadow where they stood a greenish-blue flame, circular in shape, crackled

and spat like sparklers on the Fourth of July. Higher and higher the circle withdrew until, at last, it was no more than one of many stars in the night sky.

Mason Kent chuckled.

"Kurokin's taking no chances," he observed to the awe-stricken watchers. "He has destroyed the vacuum tube. The earth and the moon are no longer neighbors, but are merely a planet and its faithful satellite."

Already Justin Holmes had relayed the flash to his paper. Now he turned to Kent.

"There are two loose ends I'd like cleared up for the *'Enterprise'* and the news services," he said. "Are the moon dwellers hostile? Are our Sky-peepers justified in believing the moon people have super-guns with which to attack the earth now that their amalgamation plan has been abandoned?"

Kent laughed and shook his head. His fair hair gleamed in the light of the dozens of automobile headlights which encircled the little group of principals in a drama now nearing its end.

"Those are giant telescopes," he said. "I should know—I helped make them, and they are ring-dazzlers, if I do say so. But they're perfectly harmless."

"**WHAT** will Kurokin's failure to put across his immigration plan mean to the moon people? Will they be resentful or resigned?"

Kent's smile vanished and his laughing eyes sobered. He spoke slowly, and,

for the first time, his earth neighbors saw him as Kurokin had seen him, as a genius of the ages, born thousands of years before his time. There was the light of prophecy on his face as he answered, simply:

"The moon waits."

The publisher stared.

"For what?" he asked at last, as if the words came without his volition.

"The moon has learned patience," Kent went on, gently. "A few hundreds or thousands of years more are, after all, endurable to the people of Krod-el-tsar. Their ruler understands, and will tell them, that the very traits that prevent our harmonious agreement in the matter of interplanetary amalgamation, which might have proved our salvation, will assure continued selfishness, strife and warfare among the nations of the earth. Sooner or later we will spend all our vitality in greed and discord."

"Even then, our earth planet will still be young. The moon waits."

Shivering as if from a cold wind, the crowd dissipated in silence.

Erika shuddered. Kent put an arm around her and guided her to her father's automobile. As they walked, the chill of his words had already lifted, and, so far as they were concerned, their spell was gone.

The two were chattering with a youthful inconsequentiality that was thoughtful and even gay.

But who took the moon girl? She had a choice of two.

THE END

Noekken of Norway

To really enjoy travel in foreign countries, one should get "the atmosphere," as it is called. Norway has a distinct atmosphere of its own, and in this story it is reproduced with great fidelity. The author has lived in Norway and knows the language and he has made the strange apparition seem very real.

By BOB OLSEN

THE TARN OF PERIL

WHATEVER you do, laddy of mine, you must keep away from Bjerke Tjern!"

This warning, uttered in a squeaky voice by the wrinkled lips of Borghild Bjornsdatter, was my first introduction to that pool of mystery and death which the Norwegian country-folk called "Birch Tarn".

"Why do you say that, Granny?" I asked in my labored and somewhat broken Norwegian, "What's the matter with Bjerke Tjern?"

"Matter enough," she whined. "Anybody but a fool would know that Bjerke Tjern is the place where Noekken abides. That ought to mean something to you, laddy mine, because it was Noekken who slew all of your uncles."

It was true that my father's three elder brothers had all disappeared under very mysterious circumstances and that neither their bodies nor any other traces of them had ever been found. I had also heard rumors that their deaths had been accomplished by supernatural influences; but naturally I had given no credence to this superstitious nonsense. It was because of this complete and sudden eradication of my Norwegian relatives that I, the last male descendent of the Lungaard clan, had been sent from America to take over the management

of the family estate requiring supervision.

"Are you sure that Bjerke Tjern is haunted, Granny Borghild?" I laughed. "If that is true, it makes me all the more eager to visit that interesting spot. I'd love to meet a huge Trolld or a band of tiny Nissen. Perhaps I might be lucky enough to run into one of those beautiful golden-haired Huldren and have a dance with her."

"Scoff all you please," the old lady grumbled, "but if you have an ounce of brains in that noddle of yours, you will keep away from Bjerke Tjern, *especially at night.*"

Stubbornness is a typically Norse trait. Some call it determination and class it as virtue. Others regard it as stupid, mulish perversity. Take your choice. For my own part, I must have inherited some of this Scandinavian obstinacy from my ancestors, for I had hardly finished supper that twilight summer evening, when I became obsessed with an overpowering desire to visit the very place which I had been warned to avoid.

Outside, near the ponderous log stable I found one of the Lungaard farm hands.

"How do I get to Bjerke Tjern?" I asked him.

For a minute or so, he just stared at me fearfully, his eyes bulging, his lower lip sagging.

Somewhat impatiently I repeated the question.



Slowly—so slowly that it didn't stir up a single ripple in that glassy surface, the Thing swelled upward until two bulging, emerald eyes came into view well above the water level.

Finally he found his voice and stammered, "You'd better not go up there, Sir."

"Never mind the advice," I snapped. "Are you going to tell me how to get to Bjerke Tjern, or—"

"It's up there," he muttered, pointing to a cleft in the mountains just north of our farm.

For a few hundred yards the trail was plainly marked; but it wasn't long before I had to force my way through a dense growth of weeds and underbrush which choked the remainder of the path. It was quite clear that the way to Bjerke Tjern had not been traversed for some time.

Crawling, climbing, stumbling over branches and creepers, I finally worked my way up to the gap in the hills, which the farm hand had pointed out to me.

When I reached the highest point in the path and looked down into the bowl-like depression on the other side of the ridge, the sight which met my eyes made me gasp with delight. Below me lay a small lake, almost perfectly circular in outline, with the loveliest little toy island set in its exact center. Never in my life have I seen a body of water so clear and so still. Not even the tiniest of ripples disturbed its placid surface. It might have been frozen over, except that even the smoothest of ice could not possibly have reflected the surroundings with such perfect faithfulness. Like an image in a flawless plate glass mirror, the mountain peaks, the clouds, the gaunt white birch trees, the toy island and the lily pads were counterfeited within that magic circle of water.

It was about nine o'clock of a summer evening, although the sun was still visible. Like a great crimson ball it hung just over the hill to the southwest. With incredible speed it rolled downward. By the time I reached the ridge it had

slid out of sight behind the horizon. Down in that cupped amphitheater in which the tarn lay sleeping, the direct light of the sun must have vanished some time previously. Strange to say, however, it seemed to be illuminated much clearer by the mysterious Norse twilight than by the glare of a noonday sun.

One thing that heightened this illusion was the total lack of shadows. Like fluid light, the ghastly, crepuscular glow seemed to flow into every nook and cranny, bringing out all the details with startling clearness.

The light was not the only thing which had been transformed. There were equally drastic changes in the sounds which reached—or rather failed to reach my ears. A few minutes earlier the woods had been teeming with life. Numberless birds had been twittering and chattering in the branches. Twigs had crackled beneath the steps of small animals. The leaves had rustled continuously as they were whipped about by the brisk west wind.

But now, after sun-down, all these sounds had been suddenly hushed. Not a breath of air was stirring. Not a bird chirped. Not a branch creaked. It was as if Mother Nature was angry with her children and put them all to bed before their time.

In that deathly, sepulchral silence I found myself treading on tip toes, almost holding my breath for fear that I might miss hearing some slight sound to tell me there were other living creatures besides myself in that place of mystery.

Carefully and stealthily I clambered down the slope which led to the pond. Cautious as I was I couldn't help making a lot of noise. Each time a twig snapped or a pebble rolled down the hill ahead of me, the sound seemed to be magnified and repeated again and again by the echoing hills which guarded the tarn.

When I reached the grassy shore my nostrils were greeted by a delightful perfume. Clearly it originated from a fleet of water lilies which rode at anchor a dozen yards beyond my reach. The waxy blossoms, nestling among the oval leaves and spear-shaped buds, were as beautiful as they were fragrant. I had an intense yearning to pluck them.

Searching for a way to accomplish this purpose without exposing myself to the frigid waters of the lake, I stumbled upon a weather-beaten rowboat. It was an ancient pram, exactly like the small boats which the Vikings used in olden days for making short trips across the fjords. Staunchly built of oaken planks it had obviously rested there, embedded in the mud, for many years.

Despite its age, the skiff looked quite sound and seaworthy, except that it was half full of rainwater. I tried to empty it by tipping it over on its side, but it was too heavy for me alone to handle. Then, a few feet away I discovered another mysterious object. It was a silver-mounted drinking horn, such as the Norsemen of yore used for quaffing their mead.

Using it as a bailer, I soon had most of the water out of the boat. I expected to have a job loosening the craft from its muddy bed, but it slid out easily at the first push I gave it.

Tossing the drinking horn into the bottom of the boat, I looked around, half expecting to find a pair of ancient oars conveniently laid out for me, but in this I was disappointed. So I opened my jack-knife and cut down a birch sapling. Amputating the top and lopping off the branches, I fashioned a stout pole about fifteen feet long. Equipped with this, I stepped into the pram and shoved off.

As the prow of the craft nosed in among the moored lily pads, I leaned over the stern and, thrusting my hand

far down into the water caught hold of one of the wiry stems and jerked a blossom loose.

Hardly had I plucked the water lily when I felt a jar which made me almost lose my balance.

The boat began to move!

Straight for the center of the lake it headed, gliding silently along as if it were being towed by an underwater cable. I peered into the water on both sides of the pram but could see nothing but the lily stems and the angular furrows which the nose of the boat was plowing in the clear, transparent water.

Halfway to the island the skiff stopped abruptly. I heard a cracking sound and was horrified to see the thick, oaken sides of the boat bend inward as if they were being crushed between the jaws of a powerful, hydraulic press. Along the seams in the bottom of the craft two large cracks yawned. Water, cold as a glacier stream, began to gush against my legs.

Grabbing the drinking horn, I started to bail in frantic haste.

THEN I SAW IT!

Between me and the island, another smaller isle reared itself above the surface of the water. At first it looked like some floating, inanimate object, so formless and so lifeless did it seem to be.

Slowly—so slowly that it didn't stir up a single ripple in that glassy surface, the Thing swelled upward until two bulging, emerald eyes came into view just above the water level. How can I hope to describe what I saw in those unspeakable eyes? Hunger, lust, ferocity, wickedness, cruelty, and devilish, murderous *hate* were all written there.

In my terror I forgot to bail, but it wouldn't have made any difference anyway for the gunwales of the pram were already awash. The frigid water made my legs feel as if they were frozen in a solid block of ice.

Then the fish, or animal, or whatever it was, began to move leisurely toward me.

I waited no longer. Pulling myself out of the damnable spell of fear which had taken possession of me, I stood up, placed my feet against the high stern of the pram and with a mighty kick, dove into the icy water. Luckily for me I had done a lot of swimming in my youth. Apparently Nøkken (I suppose I may as well refer to that Thing by its Norse name) had never before had to deal with a swimmer who knew the Australian crawl stroke. Otherwise I am sure it would not have permitted me to get such a start. I must have broken a record for the twenty-yard dash in the sprint I made that day. Nevertheless, I had barely scrambled up on the bank when I heard Nøkken slithering out of the water behind me. Without turning around I ran toward the path with all the speed I could muster. I hadn't taken more than a few steps when I stumbled over an exposed root and fell flat on my face.

Something heavy and cold and slimy flowed over my foot and wrapped itself around my left leg. Then I felt myself being dragged, slowly and relentlessly toward the water. I managed to twist my body around so that I was in a sitting position. Glaring at me, only a few feet away were those horrible, fiendish eyes. They were embedded in a loathesome mass of translucent glair, resembling the body of a colossal, shapeless jelly-fish.

One edge of this preposterous monster had wrapped itself about my leg. The opposite side of it was still in the water, six or seven yards away. Apparently without effort, the creature seemed to flow along the ground, dragging me along with it. Frantically clutching for something to hang to, my hand closed over the top of the birch sapling which

I had dropped there a few minutes before. Using it as a whip, I struck again and again at the part of the beast which gripped my leg.

Against such a formidable foe my improvised weapon seemed ridiculously puny; yet it proved to be far more effective than I could reasonably have expected. Beneath the stinging blows of the switch, the jelly-like substance cringed and drew back. Jerking my leg free from that dire embrace, I leaped to my feet and dashed madly up that tangled trail which (in my hopes at least) led to safety.

As I crashed down through the underbrush on the southerly slope of the ridge, I saw, looming up before me, the figure of a man. It was Lars Thorvaldsen, Borghild Bjornsdatter's grandson.

Tall, broadshouldered and blond, with prominent cheekbones and a firm, determined mouth, Lars was a typical Nordic farmer lad. Of all the men and women who made their home at Lundgaard, Thorvaldsen was the only one who had been educated beyond the rudimentary requirements of the local country schools. Having displayed unusual interest in scholarly attainments, Lars had been awarded a stipendium and a scholarship at the University of Oslo. He spoke perfect English, with the meticulous inflection of an Oxford graduate.

"Hi, there, George!" he greeted me. "Where the devil have you been? I've hunted for you endlessly."

"I've been to Bjerke Tjern," I panted. "There's a—there's a—"

As I paused to catch my breath, Lars suddenly grasped me by the arm and cried, "What's the matter with you man? You look like you've seen a ghost!"

"I have!" was my excited response. "I've seen Nøkken!"

"You've seen what?"

"Nøkken," I whispered. "Granny Borghild was right. There is something

—something horrible, something supernatural up there in Bjerke Tjern!"

I half expected him to make fun of me. Instead he put his arm around my shoulder and said in a kind, soothing voice. "You're all excited, my boy. Here, sit down on this log and tell me what happened."

After first casting a furtive glance behind me to make sure that I had not been followed, I sat down and, in short, jerky sentences related to him my encounter with the monster of Bjerke Tjern.

In concluding my narrative I said, "I know, Lars, that you are not superstitious like the rest of the folks around here. You probably think I've been seeing things. But I'm telling you that I saw Nøkken just as clearly as I see you now. It caught hold of me and tried to drag me into the water. I'm sure it wasn't imagination on my part."

"Of course it wasn't," he conceded.

"Then you really believe me—you think that Nøkken actually exists?"

"Certainly."

Without waiting for me to finish my sentence, Lars went on: "I've made quite a study of Norse folk lore. It's a very interesting subject. Most so-called educated people, are inclined to dismiss these stories lightly—regarding them purely as myths, which they think are based solely on ignorance and superstition. My investigations have led me to the conclusion that, after due allowances have been made for exaggerations which may naturally be expected when narratives of this sort are retold again and again, all of these familiar stories originated in actual, true experiences of sane, sober human beings."

"Do you really believe that?" I asked in astonishment.

"Most certainly," he assured me. "There isn't one of these so-called supernatural beings, mentioned in folk lore,

that cannot be explained in accordance with well recognized scientific facts."

"For instance?" I prompted him.

"Well, suppose we start with Trollds. They were nothing but giants. Real giants are not at all uncommon, even today."

"True enough," I corroborated him. "And one of the best known of the modern giants is a motion picture actor and was born in Norway."

"There are plenty of other giants, besides those who exhibit themselves in shows," Lars rejoined. "Science explains them as cases of overdeveloped pituitary glands. Most of these giants are sensitive about their abnormal size. Consequently they prefer to live apart from other people. That trait ties in with the stories about Trollds, who were supposed to lead solitary lives."

"Sounds reasonable," I commented. "But you could hardly say that Nøkken—"

He interrupted me with, "Giants are not the only freaks that can be accounted for by endocrinology. Take for example the little people who are called Nissen. They were nothing more nor less than midgets, of which there are thousands in existence today. Every biologist knows that midgets result from deficiency in the secretion of the thyroid gland. This hormone, you know, has been isolated and has been given the name of *Thyroxine*. Analysis shows that this substance contains iodine. It is a well known fact that midgets are prevalent in places where people drink water from melted snow and which consequently contains no iodine. Hence we would naturally expect to find many dwarfs, or Nissen, if you want to call them that, in the mountainous sections of Norway."

"To be sure," I agreed. "But the Trollds and Nissen were at least shaped like human beings. You could hardly attribute a monster like Nøkken to

glandular disturbances of animal beings."

"Don't be so positive about that," he contradicted me.

"You mean?"

"Just this. Nøkken of course is not human in origin—at least one would hardly suppose so, to judge from the generally accepted descriptions of the being, with which your account seems to agree remarkably."

"Then in the name of creation, what is it?"

"My theory is that Nøkken is an abnormal development of some simple, extremely low type of organism."

"For instance," I persisted.

"Well it might be an over-developed amoeba."

"Amoeba?" I questioned. "What in the dickens is an amoeba?"

"It's a microscopic organism. You know what protoplasm is don't you?"

I didn't know, but I nodded nevertheless.

"That's all there is to an amoeba." He went on, "It's just a single-celled blob of protoplasm. It can change its shape at will. That's how it got its name. Amoeba comes from a Greek word meaning change. The amoeba obtains its food by wrapping itself around other microbes and digesting them."

"Do you mean to infer that Nøkken mistook me for a microbe?"

"It probably wasn't particularly choosy about its diet," Lars laughed. "To a monster such as that, almost anything living would be acceptable food."

By this time I had recovered sufficiently from my fright so that I could appreciate the ludicrous aspects of the adventure; so I came back with, "Is that so? By the way that baby went for me, I am sure it regarded me as an especially delicious morsel."

"Maybe so," Lars conceded.

"And, furthermore," I continued, "I don't think that thing I saw at Bjerke

Tjern was anything like an amoeba."

"According to your description it was very much like a gigantic amoeba," Lars disagreed.

"But I thought you said an amoeba is just a single cell."

"Correct. What of it?"

"Oh nothing," I said sarcastically, "Except that a single cell is always microscopic in size."

"Not necessarily," he contradicted me. "The yolk of an ostrich egg is a single cell and you could hardly call that microscopic. Nevertheless you are right when you infer that amœbas and other protozoa are usually minutely small. When one of them reaches maturity it divides, forming two daughter amœbas. Sometimes two amœbas fuse together to form one organism."

"What of it?" I challenged.

"Just this: It is quite conceivable that, under certain conditions, which may happen to exist in Bjerke Tjern, an amoeba might continue to grow without dividing until it reached gigantic proportions."

"And if that happened would it still be a single cell?" I asked.

"Possibly. Why?"

"I don't see how it could be possible for a single cell to be so large."

"Why not? After all, size is relative. The yolk of an egg is probably millions of times as large as a microbe. Yet each of them is a single cell. And surely it wouldn't take more than a few million yolks to make a creature the size of Nøkken."

"All right," I said. "Suppose we assume that the Thing in Bjerke Tjern is an overgrown amoeba. What then?"

"Nothing except that I think it is your duty to exterminate it."

"What?" I yelled.

"I said it is your duty to exterminate Nøkken before it kills any more people."

"No thanks," was my emphatic re-

sponse. "I've had one bout with it. That's a plenty."

As if to express his contempt, Lars cleared his throat and spat at a cluster of caraway stalks which grew beside the path.

"So you're afraid, are you?" he sneered.

"Not exactly afraid. But what's the use of borrowing trouble?"

"I just told you why. A monster like that is a constant menace to human life. It ought to be stamped out before it kills any more people."

"Granted," I agreed. "But why should I do the dirty work?"

Speaking in a disdainful tone, Lars said, "Because Nøkken has already killed three of your father's brothers. You are the only one of the Lundgaards who is left here now. Aren't you man enough to understand that you are the one who should avenge the deaths of your kinsmen?"

"I guess I'm man enough to assume any responsibilities that rightfully fall on my shoulders," I retorted angrily.

"Spoken like a true Norseman!" Lars exclaimed. "What do you say we go gunning for Nøkken this very night?"

"We?" I echoed. "You mean that you will help me kill Nøkken?"

"Certainly I will help you. That is if you want me to."

"I'll be grateful for your assistance," I assured him. "Never having hunted for giant amoebas, I'll probably need plenty of coaching. Just what is the proper procedure in a case like this?"

"I have a dandy Krag-Jørgensen rifle," he told me. "And I'm sure I can scare up some kind of gun for you. I'll go and fetch them."

"What's the hurry?" I hedged. "Why do you want to go after it to-night?"

"Because it is evidently out hunting for food to-night. If it finds something to eat and returns to its lair it may not

show up again for a long, long while."

"But it's getting late," Showing him my wrist watch I protested, "Look it's nearly eleven. In a few minutes there won't even be enough twilight to see by. Why can't we wait until to-morrow morning?"

"They say Nøkken never makes his appearance by daylight," Lars reminded me.

"Then let's make it to-morrow evening."

Lars agreed.

After a sleepless night, pregnant with dread and worry, I arose early and went to the huge room which served as kitchen, refectory and assembly room at Lundgaard.

Early as I was, Granny Bjørnsdatter had risen ahead of me. She had finished her breakfast and was sitting by the stone hearth embroidering a wonderful Hardanger tablecloth.

After we had exchanged greetings I said, "Please tell me more about Nøkken, little Grandmother."

"What do you want to know about it, laddy of mine?" she mumbled through her toothless lips.

"I'd like to know what Nøkken looks like and how it behaves." I suggested.

"Nøkken takes many forms," Borg-hild began.

I was somewhat startled to hear that. It tallied so closely with what Lars had said about the proclivity of amoebas for constantly changing their shapes. However, Granny's next statement was not nearly so scientific. It was, "Sometimes it takes the form of a dog or wolf. At other times it makes itself look like an oaken chest with copper bands. When some nosey dunce goes to investigate—*op!* Out jumps Nøkken and the dunce is in his power!"

"Nøkken must be a clever fellow," I remarked.

"You have said it. But its favorite

trick is to take the shape of a big, black horse. When he catches sight of his victim he snuggles right up to him and coaxes the fellow to climb up on his back. If he is fool enough to do it, opi! Nøekken gives one big leap out into the tarn and devours the dunce with one big gulp."

"But doesn't Nøekken stay in the water most of the time?" I asked.

"Yes. It's only when he is very hungry that he starts hunting on land. Generally he is content to lie in wait, floating quietly on the surface of the tarn like a stump or a log. Sometimes he contrives to have a pram handy, by the shore of the tarn. It any man is fool enough to get into that boat, he may as well say his prayers."

I was becoming more and more interested in Borghild's dissertation.

"What happens to the dunce if he gets into the boat?" I asked eagerly.

"First Nøekken sneaks up under the water and grabs hold of the bottom of the pram. Then he gives it a tug and tows it out into deep water."

"And then?" I prompted.

"Sometimes he tips the boat over. But his favorite stunt is to squeeze the pram until it cracks open."

Reaching out she picked up a small match box and held it up in her bony fingers as she went on, "Nøekken is so strong that he can crack the stoutest boat just like this," and she crushed the flimsy box, scattering the matches all over the floor.

"What happens next?" I said with a shudder.

"Naturally the boat sinks and the dunce is at the mercy of Nøekken. It doesn't matter whether he can swim or not, Nøekken is sure to get him. Sometimes he gobbles him up with the first gulp. But if he isn't very hungry and the man is a good swimmer, Nøekken loves to play with his victim, like a cat

with a mouse. Still another clever trick of Nøekken is to—"

"Excuse me Granny," I interrupted her. "Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Certainly not, laddy of mine. What is it?"

"Suppose one wanted to do away with Nøekken. Isn't there some way one could kill it or exorcise it?"

"There is only one way I know of to slay Nøekken, and that is with an arrow made of mistletoe wood."

"How about a silver bullet? Wouldn't that be a good thing to kill Nøekken with?"

"Of course not, you dunce. Silver bullets are for were-wolves. Any fool knows that!"

"But how should one of these mistletoe arrows be made? Are there any special rules to be observed?"

"Naturally. In the first place it must have neither a metal nor a stone head. The point must be sharpened with a dirk that has killed a man and must be hardened by heating it over a fire made of caraway stalks. Crow feathers are best for the end."

"How about the bow? Does that have to be made in any special way?"

"Of course not. Any bow will do. One can even throw the arrow if one is strong enough."

What happened after I left Granny Bjornsdatter I hesitate to tell. Even to-day I can't help feeling a bit ashamed of the way in which I permitted my supposedly educated mind to be swayed by atavistic superstitions. I excused myself by reflecting that Granny Bjornsdatter's descriptions of the appearance and behavior of the Thing at Bjerke Tjern had been amazingly accurate. Naturally I did not give any credence to the parts about the creature assuming the shapes of wolves and horses, but I had to admit that the account of what

Nøekken did, to a dunce who embarked in a boat, coincided remarkably with my own experience. I began to think that Borghild knew more about Nøekken than Lars, with all his scientific training.

As far as the mistletoe myth was concerned, perhaps there was as much science as magic behind that idea. Who could tell us that the sap of this weird parasitic plant might not be poisonous to the thing that Granny called Nøekken?

I located a few sprigs of mistletoe in an old, run-down orchard belonging to one of our neighbors. From Lundgaard's well-stocked armory I selected a wicked looking dagger with brownish stains on its blade. With it I fashioned two short arrows according to Granny's instructions. I also made a bow from a spruce sapling and spent a few hours practicing with it. Though I got so I could hit the end of a cask providing I got close enough to it, I certainly was no rival of Robin Hood or William Tell.

That evening Lars and I slipped away from the farm shortly after supper. I concealed my bow and my mistletoe arrows by rolling them up in a blanket of homespun wool which I lugged under my arm. In the other hand I carried a rifle. Lars was similarly armed.

When we reached the tarn, twilight had overtaken us, yet the natural amphitheater was illuminated with incomparable clearness. Taking up positions a few feet from each other, we sat on the grass with our backs against a couple of birch trees.

We decided it was best not to talk to each other. After all, what was there to say? Gradually almost imperceptibly, the weird, ghostly light faded. After what seemed at least ten hours of breathless suspense, I heard a rhythmic series of snores from the place where Lars was sitting. My eyes had become blurred from gazing at the glassy surface of the lake and I had just started

to nod myself when I saw Nøekken. Only five or six inches of its body protruded above the surface in the midst of the fleet of lily pads which were moored about twenty yards from the shore. I would never have seen it had it not been for the luminous gleam in its baleful eyes.

Crawling softly to where Lars was reclining, I slapped him gently on the cheek. He awoke with a jump.

"It's there," I whispered. "Out there among the lily pads. You can see it can't you?"

"Like hell I can," he swore softly. "Where the devil is it?"

"Get your gun ready and I'll show you. When I turn my electric torch on him, let him have it. Are you ready?"

"Let her go!"

I pressed the button of my American flashlight and directed its beam straight into the eyes of the creature that lurked among the lily pads. There was a sharp crash followed by deafening reverberations which the echoes repeated and magnified to the proportions of a long peal of thunder.

Like most Norwegians, Lars was a dead shot with a rifle. At that distance he couldn't possibly have missed. In fact I am positive I saw the bullet spatter a tiny jet of spray just a fraction of an inch below one of the monster's eyes.

I expected to see the body sink beneath the surface, but instead it started to swell up like a balloon does when the gas is first turned into it. Then it moved slowly toward us.

There was no need for the flash-light now. Lars, I knew, could see his quarry plainly. He ran to the edge of the water, pumping bullets into that ominous form as fast as he could work the bolt of his gun between repeated loadings of the magazine.

Suddenly I remembered about my

bow and arrows and ran back to my blanket to get them. When I turned around again, the Thing was only a few feet from where Lars was standing. The muzzle of his rifle was almost touching it when Lars fired his last shot and took to his heels.

Moving with amazing speed the monster slid along the ground in pursuit.

With trembling fingers I fitted an arrow to the string of my bow, took quick aim and let fly. The dart hit the earth more than a foot behind the pursuing beast. Before I had time to get a second arrow ready the forward edge of the creature shot out and gave Lars a resounding slap on the back, sending him tumbling to the turf. Then, repeating the same tactics as it had used with me, it wrapped a portion of itself about Lars' legs and started to drag him toward the water.

Screaming with terror, Lars clutched madly at everything that lay in his way. Luckily he managed to throw his arms around a young birch tree, locking his fingers together and hanging on with superhuman strength which fear inspires.

"Help, George!" He shrieked. "Help me or I'm a dead man."

I picked up my rifle and pumped several shots into that horrid mass, taking care to aim at the parts which were farthest away from Lars' body. The bullets seemed to have no effect whatever on Nøkken. It continued to heave and tug at Lars' body until I could hear the joints of his shoulders crack.

When I had fired my last cartridge, I heaved the gun itself, straight at those two unspeakable eyes. It sank out of sight in that plastic mass of flesh, which closed oozingly over it.

Then I thought of my remaining arrow, which was sticking in my belt. I had dropped the bow when I picked up my gun. While I was hunting for it I could hear Lars groaning and scream-

ing in agony. "Heaven help me!" he yelled in Norwegian.

"I can't hold fast any longer!"

Just then a miracle happened. At any rate, to my tortured, fear numbed brain it seemed like a miracle.

Although it was only a few minutes after three o'clock, dawn was beginning to break over the hill to the northeast of us. The spot we had selected for our vigil was near the southwesterly edge of the lake. The first beams of the morning sun which crept down into that wooded bowl seemed to drench both Lars and Nøkken in rosy light.

Aided by this unexpected illumination, I quickly located my discarded bow. Carefully fitting my last mistletoe arrow to the cord, I drew as close to the monster as I dared. As I sighted along the shaft, I saw something which had previously escaped my notice but which was now clearly revealed by the direct sunlight.

In the midst of that translucent mass of jelly-like glair there was a globule of darker hue. It was about the size of a watermelon and it throbbed and squirmed within the outer covering of protoplasm. For all I knew it was the creature's heart—if it had a heart—or it might have been its brain. Whatever it was, it looked like a vital organ and I decided that, if I was ever going to kill Nøkken, that inner spheroid would have to be my target.

Taking careful aim and drawing the cord of my bow back as far as I dared, I let the arrow fly. Straight through that slimy mass it sped, scoring almost a perfect bull's-eye in its central core.

A terrific shudder ran all through that enormous body. Slowly its grip on Lars relaxed and it sank down as flat as an enormous pancake. Feeling himself free from that terrible embrace, Lars crawled out from under the heavy body, which was now inert and lifeless.

"Are you all right?" I gasped. "Can you walk?"

"Can I walk?" he yelled. "No! I can't walk a step. But just watch me run!" and he dashed up the tangled trail at a pace that would have made Frank Wyckoff turn green with envy. Needless to add, I lost no time in following him.

Remembering somewhat tardily the warnings which Granny Bjornsdatter had given us, we waited until high noon before venturing back to the tarn. We found what was left of my gun. The stock was completely missing and the metal parts were corroded as if they had been soaked in nitric acid.

Surrounding the remains of the weapon was a ring of matted grass, which was seared to a sickly yellow hue. It was covered with a slimy, glistening substance such as one sees on the beach where a jelly fish has melted in the sun.

"That's all that's left of Nœkken!" I announced. "When it was hit by the direct rays of the sun, it just melted away. It looks like your amoeba theory is correct."

"You are altogether too modest;" he complimented me. "The sun may have had something to do with Nœkken's demise, but I don't think there is any

question but that you killed it when you shot that arrow into its nucleus."

"Nucleus?" I questioned.

"Yes. That's what they call the central, vital portion of an amoeba. It was so small in comparison to the size of the whole creature that I must have missed it completely with my bullets."

"Then you really think that the mistletoe arrow did the trick?"

"Yes. But any kind of arrow would have served just as well. The mistletoe had nothing to do with it."

"O, ja?" I said. The inflection I gave to the Norwegian words sound exactly like the American slang expression, "Oh, yeah?"

I bent down and picked up what looked like the branch of a birch tree.

"Do you see this?" I went on. "It's the switch I used to beat off Nœkken when he tried to drag me into the water the day before yesterday. I guess you know now that it wasn't such an easy task to accomplish. Just take a good look at this branch."

He examined it and then said, in English:

"Well, I'll be a dirty name. If that isn't a sprig of mistletoe growing out of that birch switch. I'll eat what's left of Nœkken!"

THE END

IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE

The Rape of the Solar-System

By Leslie F. Stone

The Sunless World

By Neil R. Jones

Men Created for Death

By Henry J. Kostkos

And other engrossing science-fiction stories by well-known writers.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

Between Worlds

IT was nearing midnight when I opened the door of my house in a suburb of Boston, to find Henry, servant, friend and adviser to me, waiting for my return. I knew that something unusual had transpired to keep him awake so late.

"Has something of importance come up, Henry?" I asked, "I surely hope that it will not take me out again to-night."

"There is nothing unusual in the line of business, but an interesting and lengthy message has come over the Selenimeter. As is your wish, I went to the Sun-Tower at regular intervals, at ten o'clock this morning a coherent call was registered! I have made shorthand notes of the complete message as I received it.

My interest quickened, because I knew that only one man could send an intelligible message to me over this set-up! This type of Selenimeter had been worked out years ago by David Garfield and myself. I had received many impressions on the plate of the machine, but never before had any message been received that we could decipher.

The principle of the Selenimeter was by no means new, its possibilities having

been realized at the beginning of the twentieth century. It embodied the transmission and reception of messages, using light waves as the carrier.

THIS date, Feb. 22, 2032, the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of that great American, George Washington, had been an extremely busy day for me. Early in the morning I had delivered an address to the students of Harvard University. By 2 P. M. I had been on the speaker's platform at the University of Southern California. Swift methods of travel through the upper levels of the atmosphere have been developed in the last twenty years, making possible transcontinental journeys in five hours. All the fastest ships are powered by the energy released by the transmutation of elements.

Twenty-eight years before, in the year 2004, David Garfield had left earth on a journey to the moon in one of the then new "Transatel" ships. The object of his trip had been scientific, to check and make observations on the Transit of Venus, then in conjunction with earth and sun.

Astronomical observations had practically assured us that the moon was a "dead" satellite, with little, if any, atmosphere at its surface, certainly not enough to sustain life, as we are fami-



As far as the searchlights could reach, the ground was covered by the mass of slow moving reptiles—a tide of devastation, stripping all vegetation as they advanced.

liar with it. This contingency had been taken care of by carrying "canned" foods, oxygen, etc., for the duration of the observations. Garfield, as the most successful and daring of pilots in the employ of our government, had been chosen to make the flight. Any of the scientific workers would have been glad of the chance, but we bowed to superior skill. Since the time that my friend had left the surface of the earth no word of him had been received until this day. I shall continue the story in the words of David Garfield.

* * * * *

THE event of my leaving the Government Field at Mt. Moosilac may be remembered by many of those that were in the huge crowd that collected to witness that flight. People and ships were collected there from practically all parts of the civilized world. I remember viewing, from the port of my ship, a flagship of the Imperial Japanese Air Force, beside this rested a great Air Liner from Norway. The flags and emblems of all nations were there and, experienced pilots that I was, I was thrilled by the homage paid to my departure, in such a glorious send-off.

After brief farewells to my friends, I entered the ship, closed and sealed the outer and inner locks. Setting the controls to rise at surface speed I opened the valves on the Transmutor and knew by my Altimeter that I was leaving the surface of the earth.

As I rose slowly to a higher level I could see more clearly the magnificent assemblage that had come from near and far to witness this event. Great Air Liners, yachts and fighting craft of the new Transatel type, and many of the older type of rocket ships as well, rested on the earth below. Around me in the air was an immense convoy of ships that would see me to the outer reaches of the earth's atmosphere, where

they must of necessity return, not being designed for space travel. Near me, in close formation, were six of the large fighting ships of the United States Army, my guard, the Government Officials were trustful—but cautious.

Slowly I rose, reluctant to leave, but soon the level was reached from which I must proceed alone. A message to the commander of the squadron that all was well, a radio flash of farewell to the others and I sped onward, alone.

At least I had presumed that I would be alone, but I had only covered a short distance when I discovered that I could not hold my original course but was flying parallel to the surface of the earth, I was unable to make the ship rise from this level!

I NOTED that the instrument recording the total weight aboard the ship was reading incorrectly and began a frenzied check to locate the excess, as it showed far above the maximum. This puzzled me a great deal, as I had personally checked and rechecked all weights aboard, knowing very well that weight and cubic space must balance in travel of this sort. At the end of half an hour I had discovered the cause of the trouble, I had a stowaway! One of my best friends, "Tiny" Bill Hughes, so called because of his six feet four inches of height. I had missed him in the confusion of departure, I might have known that he would make good his promise to make the trip.

"So you sneaked aboard after all, you've certainly given me a bad half-hour! Now you can amuse yourself by dumping 220 pounds of ballast, or perhaps you would rather return, if we can return now!"

"Don't take me back now, my captain" he replied with mock solemnity, "think of all the trouble necessary for me to get here. I had to bribe three

men and knock another one senseless in order to get aboard, I'll dump the ballast."

In a few minutes the instruments had returned to their normal positions and I shouted to Bill, "Come on into the observation room and view the universe."

"How did you get by Dowling?" I asked.

"He was the man that I had to knock out, tie up and gag. He will be freed soon. I left word, and probably he will never forgive me."

"You may wish that you had never embarked—we might not get back!" He shrugged his shoulders and smiled, a true adventurer, to him it was all the same, he was equally at home in the Gobi Desert, on Polar Seas, or hurtling through space, at an almost unbelievable rate of speed. Secretly I was glad that he was with me.

CONVERSATION soon lagged as we viewed the ever-changing scene below. Swiftly the details of our earth's surface changed as we drew farther away, the Rocky Mountains and the Andes took on the appearance of threads on mounds of earth, the great Pacific became a toy lake! As the moments passed and we sped on into the void the whole panorama assumed a rose colored glow, the reflection of the sun's rays upon the earth.

Directly above us, the moon was in view, a counterpart of the sphere below, but with a colder glow, as though the inner fires of life had been quenched and everything was ages old. We were soon to learn that this was not entirely correct.

How I wished that it had been possible for us to have taken along one of the great telescopes from the observatory at Mt. Wilson. Free from the restraining influences of the earth's hor-

izon greater and greater numbers of the constellations came into our field of vision. From different parts of the surface of the earth I had viewed them all, to have the scene in its entirety, and at one time, was glorious. I remarked on the names given to the constellations by the men of ancient Phoenicia, perhaps by races of greater antiquity than they. The names of these stories in the sky still hold in a majority of cases. Hydra, the serpent, its entire configuration covering many light years of space, Centaurus, the Centaur, Pegasus, the horse in the heavens. These and a host of others, their names truly descriptive.

CHAPTER II

Lost in Space

ONE hundred hours away from earth, and rapidly approaching our objective, we began our preparations for landing. These were simple enough, consisting of the cutting off of power on the driving Transmutor and the application of power to a Transmutor designed to drive in the opposite direction.

"Hardly an inviting place to call home, is it?" said my companion as we gazed upon the rough and rugged terrain beneath us. Jagged mountain peaks towered far above the surface, craters and pits were scattered everywhere, the scene in composite giving the impression that in ages past such tremendous pull had been exerted upon the surface by the parent planet as to draw the weaker parts outward in haphazard fashion.

"According to our charts, we must be approaching the moon at her southern pole," I said, "our best point for observation will be at the equator."

Setting our main Transmutor at surface speeds, we lay a course toward the mid-section of the globe. We crossed

a section of the bed of the Mare Nubium, long since dried up, and nearing a low range of mountains at its further side we nearly met disaster! Perhaps we grew careless, lost in wonder at the scene of desolation unfolding below; certainly no warning was given to us of the terrific elemental disturbance into which we plunged.

"Beyond that range, on the higher ground we—," that sentence I never finished. As though a giant hand had seized our ship, it hurtled sideways and downwards. I was thrown from my seat, I had just time to throw my hands forward to break the worst of my fall, when my head hit the wall of the cabin and I knew no more—

I DO not know how long it was that I remained unconscious. I groped through semi-consciousness, during which time I imagined that we were being chased throughout the heavens by the moon! I awoke with a start, to find Bill surveying the wreckage of our instruments.

"I have been looking over the damage," he said, "our Transmutors are operating, but practically all of the delicate meters have been either smashed completely or thrown out of adjustment by the shock, the telescopes are also broken and we have no means of knowing whereabouts in the universe we now are! Strangely enough, the shells of the ship, both outer and inner seem to be unharmed. I believe that we may be able to repair one of the telescopes."

"What happened?" I asked.

"We must have gotten into the center of a terrific electric storm close to the surface of the moon, of a nature that we do not understand. I was thrown through the open door of the observation room and into the power room beyond. I was not badly hurt, and succeeded in getting to the controls, my

desire being to rise above the storm area. I have reversed our course as nearly as I could with the instruments out of alignment, hoping that we might get into the vicinity of earth. I imagine that we are traveling a totally different course, we seem to be in a little world of our own."

WE had the choice of cutting the Transmutor and floating through space, or of carrying on as we were, taking a chance of colliding with some wanderer of the heavens, with the possibility of finding ourselves near to some body of matter, when we had succeeded in making our repairs to the telescopes, if we could make such repairs! We found that, of the three telescopes that formed our equipment, there was a possibility of assembling one that might work.

I was in bad shape, with a dislocated shoulder and a broken collar bone but anything of action relieved the tension of hopelessness that was our lot. It would have been a cheerless prospect indeed, had there not been the possibility of getting one of the telescopes into service. I shuddered at the thought of speeding through space blindly until our fuel gave out and after that to remain in space through all time. The other extreme, that of crashing against the surface of some planet was easier to contemplate.

Now indeed was I glad that my friend had succeeded in accompanying me! Had he not been along I would probably have crashed against the surface of the moon and even if I had escaped that fate I would be unable for a long time, to make the necessary repairs that we must make. Besides, Bill is a fatalist, to him the span of life is controlled by powers that we may not alter, and nothing can shake his optimism and enthusiasm.

So we labored, fitting prisms and re-

flectors, building up one good telescope from the ruins of three. In three weeks' time we were finished. Would it work? I experienced one of the tensest moments of my life when we fitted on the eye-piece and were ready to try it out. Our work, of necessity had been within the central part of the ship, since to venture beyond the inner lock-door would have meant disintegration, except when under conditions of temperature and pressure approaching those that exist at the surface of the earth. Therefore we could only hope that the body of the instrument was unharmed.

I LOOKED into the eye-piece. It was not a very good instrument, as we had patched it up, but a section of the heavens was discernible. Directly ahead was the sun, to the right lay Mercury, on his swift erratic course, that would intersect our path at some point ahead. In the period of time that we had been without knowledge of our location we had traveled past Venus and directly toward the master of our system. If we could get into the field of attraction of Mercury we would be safe! With the instruments of the ship, to a large extent, useless, this was a difficult thing to accomplish. Mercury was traveling through space at a much faster pace than we would be able to attain but our leg of the triangle was much the shorter.

The hours that followed seemed an eternity. One of us was always posted at the telescope. The suspense even transmitted itself to my companion, but our earlier training stood us in good stead as we were used to taking long chances in the air. Eventually we got into the little planet's field of attraction.

Mercury, unlike the other satellites of the Sun, does not rotate upon its axis, but travels in its orbit, always

presenting the same face to its master. It would be suicide to attempt to land on the side that faces the sun, where temperatures approaching 700 degrees Fahrenheit must exist, but of course we were landing upon the side that is in shadow.

We could see cloud banks below, which were a very good sign, indicating as they did that water vapor was present, which in turn suggested the presence of oxygen.

I opened the safety ports to the larger Transmutor, which exhausted the power emanations into space through a series of valves, an emergency action in this case, as we were unable to completely cut off the larger engine. Then we started the braking Transmutor, applying the power cautiously at first. It was some time before we were slowed down sufficiently to surface speed. Bill connected an oxygen line and went into the space between the inner and outer shells. Soon the outer ports were opened, then the ones inside and he took a position at the outer port, shouting estimated altitude to me. I handled the braking 'mutor.

"I can breathe here without the hose line! There is oxygen present, and some sort of vegetable life exists on the surface. I am unable to say of what nature it is as the light does not seem to be very good. We are now not more than 3000 feet up, turn on all braking power and bring her to the surface!"

Quickly the onward speed checked and we came down to a nice landing, close to the shore of a great expanse of swampy lowland that stretched beyond our range of vision in one direction. In the opposite direction there lay an expanse of sloping plain reaching to distant mountains which in turn raised their peaks into the clouds. This plain was covered here and there by

great areas of vegetation, in other places there seemed to be outcroppings of naked metal. The light was poor and details were obscured.

CHAPTER III

A Startling Reception

LADY LUCK, who had dealt us so many foul blows in the past few weeks, seemed to smile again. On this landing I shuddered to think of what would have been our fate had any mishap caused us to land anywhere in the uninviting, fetid morass behind us.

"Shall we take a quick look around and then sleep?" asked Bill. "Each time I open my eyelids, it seems a greater exertion."

I was nearly asleep on my feet and worse than he, since I had not his *sang-froid*. In the last three weeks neither of us had slept except the sleep of exhaustion.

"Everything appears to be, all right," I said after we had circled the ship at a short distance. "My watch shows 10 P. M. earth time, but in the time we have been here there has been no change in the twilight haze. But light or dark I must close my eyes before long."

It seemed that I had slept but a few moments when I was awakened by the most terrible medley of noises possible to imagine. It was darker in the cabin of the ship than outside, so I switched on the illumination and woke my companion. I glanced at my timepiece. We had slept four hours.

We mounted to one of the cabins that housed our weapons, of which there were several throughout the ship, and looked down on such a sight as must have shaken the courage of our ancestors when the earth was young.

They had nothing to hide out in but

caves, while we had an armored ship, though some of the creatures on the ground below us, seemed capable of eating the ship if given a little time.

Up from the morass they had come, drawn by the strange object on the higher ground, or by the scent of living beings.

"I think we had better begin by turning on the big guns," stated Bill, "but big as they are we will have a job to clear that space out there."

AS far as our searchlights could reach we were crowded amphibians. Huge reptiles of all descriptions fought and screamed. Many of these creatures had six or eight legs, some were armored with enormous spikes, some, the larger, which I surmised were plant eaters, had rather small heads, others, jaws that would shame a crocodile, with a vicious array of teeth. In one respect they were all alike; all had eyes at least three times the size of any creature on earth. Nature had developed this condition, I presumed, to offset the rather feeble light of the habitable parts of Mercury.

All these thoughts ran through my mind in the few seconds necessary for us to run out two of our larger long range pieces.

These weapons were a development of the same power that propelled our ship—the transmutation of the elements. Powerful pressure fed one-half ounce nickel-steel slugs into the power tube. Power emanations continually fed along the barrel of the weapon. The net result was a stream of high speed projectiles fired by power to enable them to penetrate one foot of steel at ten miles, and that would kill anything animate as far distant as the angle could be calculated. Automatically swinging a 90 degree arc, they were a terrible instrument of destruction.

"See the big fellow ahead that looks

like an animated truck?" Bill asked, "I will start with him and work to the left, you work to the right."

For fifteen minutes we kept up a steady rapid fire on the massed beasts. The hideous screams of the wounded or dying rent the air. Those living were gorging themselves on the fallen. They could not advance into that sheet of steel, nor had they sufficient intelligence to run away. Hundreds perished before the horde started back to the lower land from which they came.

"At least something lives on this planet," I remarked. "I wish we could get the ship to higher ground. I don't fancy these fellows for playmates. Anyway, we had better take turns at sleeping for the next few hours.

I DREW the first watch, which proved uneventful. I spent the time in using our made-over telescope in a survey of the heavens, plotting a map of the more important stars and constellations, as seen from our present position, for our future use.

Bill let me sleep on, as the extra four hours of sleep had evidently put him right. Many hours later I woke to the odor of cooking flesh. How good it seemed after almost a month of concentrated foods.

I found him just outside the ship, busy cooking cuts of meat from some small creature that he had killed.

"I went as far as the edge of the forest," he stated, "and brought back some meat." I have eaten some already and I'm still alive."

"I need no second invitation," was my reply. "I haven't eaten any decent food since the night before we started, it seems centuries ago. Concentrated foods will sustain life, but what I would like just now would be a nice rare steak with mushrooms and all the fix-

ings, including about four cups of coffee."

"You make me homesick," he rejoined, "we have the main dish here, however, you had better fall to before I eat it all. It was only a small creature."

I fell to with a vengeance. The flesh was of very fine texture and had a sweetish taste, but was very palatable. We washed our food down with water from a swift flowing stream that was nearby. The water had a somewhat flat, metallic taste, as if it had been in contact with metals in their native state, but was a pleasure after the synthetic brand that we had used in our journey hither.

There is no day or night here, as we know them on earth. As one journeys from the outer edge of the planet toward the central sections of the habitable side, less and less light is present, much of this half is in total darkness, lighted only by the stars, which are always in view. Then, of course a similar region exists at the opposite side of the section that is in total darkness. These same conditions exist should any point be chosen from which to start the journey. These areas of fading and reappearance of light are coincidental with temperature changes, we have concluded that both light and heat are transmitted directly through the planet itself, or through some unknown medium in its composition. They vary in intensity with the diameter of the segment of the planet at that particular point of observation.

Bill now spoke to me.

"We should take the ship farther back towards the mountains, I think. She will handle easily enough under surface conditions. I don't fancy the playmates that we have had here. Were it not for the cadavers of the ones that we killed, I would put the whole episode down as the worryings of an over-

wrought imagination. Soon this locality will become unsanitary."

We moved back to the foothills of the first great range of mountains. There, on an elevation, we landed and moored our ship. Vegetation was more profuse here, vegetation of a sort unknown to us. In the absence of direct sunlight, the trees and smaller plants had developed and thrived without leaves. All branches terminated in spongy, flowery growths of variegated colors—reds, blues, greens and yellows of every shade, woven together in a magic pattern. Never before had I seen anything of such sheer beauty. The nearest scene that I could remember approaching it for harmony of color was the New Hampshire hills in late Autumn.

Smaller plants and the counterpart of our grasses carpeted the surface, except where naked metal was exposed. The process of erosion has not been of such long duration here as upon earth, contours are sharper and stand out in bold relief.

"LOOK over there," whispered Bill, pointing to a place some distance away, across the small valley at the foot of the hill upon which we were standing. There I saw two handsome felines on the prowl, stalking birds that flew in and out among the branches of the trees. Even as we looked, the cats sank into the surface growth and became as one with its colors. Only their eyes gave them away, points of phosphorescence scintillating in the half-light, as they waited for some unsuspecting prey to come within reach of their claws. Camouflage, it was, at its greatest peak of perfection. The birds that they hunted also carried out the color scheme of the trees in which they lived. They are extremely beautiful when in motion.

"We shall have to keep a sharp look-out when exploring," I remarked, "it would be easy to walk into the reach of these creatures before seeing them. I think the pistols will be of more use than the larger guns. Let us explore that small valley first."

So we armed ourselves with field arms and pistols, compass and a good supply of concentrated food. Strangely enough there is a magnetic pole on this planet, and it closely resembles that of earth, except that it is located nearer to what we may call the true North Pole. Our compasses were serviceable.

The larger valley, that we were now in, led straight inland and was drained by a large stream. At intervals smaller valleys branched from it. We intended to explore the first smaller valley that joined the other at a point about a mile away. Walking was easy for us as the gravitational attraction here is much less than on earth. We loafed along, examining the everchanging riot of color, keeping a sharp look-out for camouflaged danger. We had decided to take it easy for the next few days, explore the nearby terrain and attempt to repair our demolished instruments so as to make the return journey. Instead:—

WE walked into the entrance of the little valley and into trouble. In the center of the valley and some three or four hundred yards away, was a band of beings, like and yet unlike ourselves. I was in the lead and turning I cautioned Bill to silence. As yet we were unseen, how long we would remain so was problematical.

Strange beings these. They carried themselves erect like ourselves, but there the similarity ended. Short, heavy bodies, covered with a sparse growth of hair and mottled with the color scheme of the surroundings, except one, a slim figure, taller than the rest, who seemed

to be either commander or captive, but who appeared, even in the dim light, to be different from the rest.

"I believe that we have been seen," volunteered my companion, "let's get into the open; these fellows will be hard to deal with in the brush if they prove hostile."

Accordingly we came out through the fringe of small trees and advanced towards the group, rifles ready. Now we could see them in greater detail. The slim, fair one was apparently a prisoner and also a woman. She was being led by a cord around her neck.

We could now see that she was of a totally different race. She was clad in a knee-length garment of some dark material, her skin was white, whereas that of her captors was mottled to blend with the color surroundings. They wore only a skin breech-clout. Her captors had heavy, brutal features with receding foreheads, large full lipped mouths, heads covered with a short, sparse growth of hair, while the face of the captive was delicately oval with flaxen hair falling to her shoulders.

As yet they appeared not to have paid particular attention to us, but now they drew together in what seemed to be a conference, gesticulating in our direction.

For a second the one who held the cord shifted his attention away from the captive. Like a flash the captive was away and clear. They did not follow, but seemed to lay the blame to us for they started a charge in our direction.

"Let them have it," I cried. Two rifles were raised—the soft whine of the weapons and the band was wiped out. However, we had failed to take into account other enemies in the vicinity. The last man had hardly fallen, when I was hit on the head by some object and consciousness left me. I after-

wards learned that I had been hit by a stone thrown from a distance of more than three hundred yards. Even discounting the lesser force of gravity here compared with that on earth, it was almost an unbelievable feat. A big league scout would find good "ivory" here in the hills of Mercury!

CHAPTER IV

The Hills of Mercury

WHEN I again regained my senses it was to find myself lying prone with my hands and feet securely bound. I lay for some time with my eyes closed fighting the dizziness resulting from the terrific blow on the head that I had received, and endeavoring to piece together from the guttural grunts of my captors, some inkling of what was to be my fate. I could make neither head nor tail of the conversation. Certainly it was unlike any speech that I had ever heard before. From the inflection of the voices, all, except one voice of dissension, were in favor of one plan; probably my speedy dispatch, but as the dissenter won out, I came to the conclusion that he must be the leader of the party.

Nothing was to be gained by delaying whatever they had decided to do with me, so I opened my eyes and moved about to attract attention. The result was immediate and violent. I was seized in a powerful grip and thrown into a sitting position with my back against a boulder. This brought again to my mind the prodigious physical strength of these men.

I was able to take in my surroundings and view my captors in greater detail. About five feet tall or slightly over, they had such thick bodies and were so heavily muscled, that I judged they would weigh about 250 pounds each, according to earthly standards. Enormous hands,

long arms, and thick shoulders all pointed to superhuman strength. The most unusual sensation of all was the scrutiny of the large eyes. In the half-light it reminded me of a meeting I had once attended as a guest of an occult society, at which the host had staged a similar bizarre effect with artificial lighting.

I tried out my varied store of languages with no results, but sign language seems to be universal and finally I succeeded in convincing the leader that I desired to have my hands and feet free. In spite of the bonds I was able to make my meaning clear. My hands and feet were unbound but first my captor took the precaution of slipping a noose of tough vine over my neck, attaching the other end to his wrist. It seemed that he didn't trust me, and was taking no chances of my getting away. He passed me the thigh-bone of some small animal—raw. I promptly refused it; I wasn't quite that hungry. I found some of the concentrated food pellets and swallowed several to satisfy my hunger and offered some to the leader. He refused as promptly as I had turned down his offering, tastes differ.

"At least," I thought, "they didn't get Bill or the girl."

In a short time we continued on eastward, toward the country of total darkness. I was fettered to one of the party when traveling, led by a length of vine like a horse. At the times when we slept, I was bound hand and foot. At the first halt I attempted to bite my way through the bonds that held my wrists, but could make no impression on the tough material. Therefore I desisted in my efforts to escape, in that manner.

All my attempts to converse, even with the leader, were met by prods in the back with a sharp stick. I judged, and rightly, that they were taking me to some chieftain; with that purpose in mind they had no further interest in me.

WE travelled ever east, long hours but at a very slow pace as these wild men are much slower in their movements than we are. We climbed the range of mountains that we had seen from the ship. From the higher passes I could see far to the west, obtaining a fair view of the country over which we had just passed. I noted that beyond the great morass near which we had landed, there was a great body of water, probably one of the Mercurian Seas.

We crossed another wide valley and began the ascent of a second and higher range of mountains. The light was now getting dimmer very rapidly and I began to have trouble with my vision, though it did not seem to bother the rest.

Near the end of the second week of my captivity we were camped in a high pass near the summit of the second range. No guards were put out this time, since no animals inhabit or hunt in these peaks of naked metal. The party was tiring from the forced marches and slept soundly. I slept for a short time also, but was awakened by the touch of hands upon my wrists!

CHAPTER V

Forest Trails

WHEN the two strange beings were noticed by her captors, the girl, quick to seize any opportunity of escape, had sped clear of the group before they were aware that she had made a break for freedom. She knew that, clear of them, she stood a good chance of gaining the shelter of the forest.

That she would be able to make her way back to her own people she doubted, but any fate was to be preferred to that which had been in store for her. Since the beginning of time, the Sen Lev, the wild men who had captured her, had raided the hunting parties of her people,

killing the men and carrying off the women, for the unmated women of the Sen Ver, her nation, hunt with the men.

Every Verean maiden carries a method of self-destruction because of this danger, when traveling to any distance from the abode of the clan. The purpose of the wild men had been to take her to some chieftain. Until they had done this, she had known that there was some measure of safety for her. Life is sweet to the young, and so she had postponed the time when she would have to kill herself.

When she had gained the cover of the scrub growth at the forest edge, she turned to see how the two strange men had fared. She saw, in amazement, that the whole band that she had been with were dead, and that the two strangers had fallen also. They were being carried away by two separate bands of the barbarians who had appeared from the forest.

She wondered where these strangers, who had so opportunely paved the way for her escape, thus saving her life, had come from. The larger man resembled the men of her own race, though none of the Verean men were as large as he. The other was much shorter, darker and very broad, yet he did not in any way resemble the Sen Lev. This was a problem to her because the only races that she knew anything about were the Sen Ver and the Sen Lev. Besides, they wore garments unlike any that she knew about.

She watched the two parties as they left the scene, each party going, by a different route, into the hills. She noted that one band, the one that held the larger man, was much greater in numbers than the other. She was powerless to help the strangers, which worried her a great deal as she was indebted to these men. Among the Sen Ver a personal debt must be paid, that is the teaching of the great Thurl. As nearly all Vereans lead an active, dangerous life, these debts

are commonplace and among these people there is little enmity. To survive the dangers of their existence they must work in unison.

WHEN the two parties had disappeared from sight the denizens of the forest came to life. Some distance away she heard the savage snarl of a flesh-eater. While she had been in the company of a large band the creatures of the wild dared not attack. Even the fiercest of the carnivores will not molest a band of Sen Lev.

Now it would be otherwise. She looked at the great forest and shuddered. She realized that she would soon become the hunted of the great beasts, that she had very little chance of ever seeing her homeland again. Panic seized her. She ran from the forest, away from the trees and the many colored plants in which danger always lurked, toward the center of the glade, following nature's urging to get into open space, where she could see approaching danger.

At the scene of the capture of the two strangers, she came upon one of the short sticks that the foreigners had used with such telling effect. She stopped, eyeing it fearfully. She approached closer to it, but nothing happened. Curiosity finally got the best of her fears and she touched it with an inquisitive toe, hastily retreating a short distance. Still nothing happened. At length she picked up the weapon and pointed it at the different objects around her, by accident her fingers found the release—she saw a tree at the edge of the forest totter and fall.

With realization that she had found the secret of the stick her courage returned. No longer was she a weak creature, no more must she hide in the caves and the trees, when Ten Eo, most savage of the flesh-eaters, prowled the aisles of the forest. She could meet him face to face and win. Exultation filled her heart.

and she shouted, perhaps to quell the fears that still persisted "Tharlan is mightier than the beasts that roam the hills, nor does she fear the reptiles of the great waters."

She did not know that the stick was effective only as long as the magazine was filled or perhaps her immediate decision would have been different. She had decided to follow the smaller party of Sen Lev, in an attempt to rescue the man that they had taken, even if she must kill all in the band to do so. In making this decision she was only following the code that had been taught to her from earliest childhood.

SHE picked up the trail and followed it easily. Before long she sighted the band. She moved closer seeking a chance to use her new-found weapon on her hated enemies, but they were all so closely packed together that she feared she would kill the stranger too. There was danger of being sighted by scouts of the party if she remained too close to them. She retreated farther to the rear, but was ready to seize any opportunity that might offer itself.

The Sen Lev halted. She saw the scouts return with meat, saw the prisoner bound and tied to one of the company. Then the guards were sent out. She knew that she must wait. Tern, greatest of hunters among the Vereans, had taught her the value of patience, to wait until an enemy had grown careless.

So she went back into the forest to locate a place to rest. She killed and cooked a meal. Then she settled herself in the cup-like hollow of an immense Loma tree, gaining her station by way of overhanging branches which she broke away after ascending, so that the smaller destructive animals, particularly a kind known as Monch, could not follow and attack her. The large carnivores could not climb to her resting-place without

warning her of their approach by the noise.

She felt reasonably secure.

FROM her vantage point she could see and hear life on every side. Hungry, eager life it was, drawn by the scent of the beast that she had killed and by the scent of the one yet alive. A pack of Monch brought down a large animal and ate their fill, leaving the greater part of the carcass. Then carnage began as the denizens of the wild closed in, savage mouths seeking flesh. Cries and snarls filled the air as the animals tore at the body and fought each other. There came a rumble close at hand, swelling to an angry screech. The forest stilled as Ten Eo entered the glade, his huge eyes blazing. Angry and sullen the lesser beasts moved away. A big feline did not move fast enough to suit the lord of the hills. Snarling, Ten Eo leaped at him, but the smaller, more agile cat leaped aside. Cornered, it would put up a fierce battle!

Either of the great beasts in a savage mood were a menace to Tharlan. She pointed the stick at the snapping, vicious pair and pressed the release. As water quenches the flame, so life ceased in the pair, and suddenly all was silent in the woodland. The ones looking on did not move, they were stunned. Death had come into their midst, silently, without warning, and had taken two of the fiercest and most dreaded of their number. It left them paralyzed. Furtively they vanished from sight, leaving the girl in sole possession. Her pæan of victory rang out, "Tharlan is master of the great beasts, none can combat the stick that kills."

While she slept, others, or perhaps the beasts that had been there first, came back. Driven by hunger they had stripped the carcasses clean, but they had done this silently, fearing to call down the wrath from the heavens.

SHE continued to follow the trail of the band, watching them continually, sleeping when they slept, persistently waiting the time that she might catch them unprepared.

Toward the end of the second week they entered the land of the heaven lights. Very few of her people had ever been as far away from their native haunts. Her father had been one of these and she had listened in wonder to his tales of these lights of the skies, hanging far away like steady eyes forever watching.

They were now nearing the top of a second and higher range of mountains. She could see that the wild men were tiring of the long marches that they had made. She had prowled their camps the last two stops, but had not been able to get close to the prisoner.

This time they did not put out any guard as they were camped on a *mesa* which was at the very height of land. As soon as they had eaten the entire band stretched out to sleep.

CHAPTER VI

Freedom

WHEN I felt the touch of hands upon my wrists, I made a quick movement as though to protect myself, as best I might, from whatever new danger threatened me!

A small, firm hand clamped over my mouth, cautioning silence. I nodded my head in acquiescence and the hands busied themselves with the knots that bound my wrists; as soon as my arms were free I quickly got rid of the remaining bonds. Cautiously we groped our way among the sleeping figures and beyond the circle of the camp. I could see, in the dim light, that my rescuer was the woman that had been held captive by the barbarians. She had given me the rifle that I had lost in the skirmish of our first explorations. I was overjoyed to get this

again. I knew that we had traveled a great distance since the time of my capture. I must make my way back in a strange world and under adverse conditions, never knowing from what source danger might threaten! Furthermore, I felt that all creatures, with the exception of the one near me, were my enemies. For about a mile we traveled swiftly and in silence, not following the trail taken by my captors in gaining the top of the range, but a shorter, steeper path to the base of the mountain.

I feared that Bill had been killed or carried away by another band of the savages. I could only hope that, as in my case, they had considered him too strange to kill outright and were taking him to their land by another route.

I turned my attention to the girl who was my companion. Among the dangers that threatened us from all sides, she seemed unafraid. Least of all did she appear to fear pursuit. At first the pace was very slow. When she understood my meaning we went on at a faster pace. Not after the first mile or so did she look backward along the trail.

At her direction I shot one of the brilliantly colored birds that were all around us. We made a fire beside a swiftly flowing little stream and cooked a meal. She didn't show any surprise at the flame but exclaimed in wonder at the automatic lighter that I used. From this I reasoned that her race was familiar with fire but had no quick method of making it. Because of her stoicism and her amazing knowledge of woodcraft I gave her the name Diana, and have always called her by that name. Tharlan is her Verean name. She called me "Sen Eil" which in her language, I afterwards found out, means "man of magic."

I then set for myself the task of learning the language that she used. By pointing at the different objects around us I learned the nouns. By repetition of

speech I learned some of the verbs and adjectives. Soon I could carry on a simple conversation with her. The language is easily learned and does not cover a greater range than do most primitive tongues.

CHAPTER VII

Ketang

BILL, far to the south, was having strange experiences. He will tell you about these events.

* * * * *

The patter of unshod feet was the first sound that pierced the veil of unconsciousness. I gave no indication that I had recovered since I knew that I would have walking in plenty to do, because the barbarians were undoubtedly taking me into captivity or else to some form of torture. Had they desired to kill me they would have done so at the place where the encounter had taken place. If they were taking me away to some form of torture I would need all my strength and speed in the final show-down. Besides, it gave me some sly satisfaction to have them carry me when I was able to walk.

When finally I decided that the game had gone on long enough I stirred and groaned, emulating returning consciousness. The party halted and I was lowered to the ground.

I looked around for Dave but could not see him. My friend must have been killed. A bizarre ending for the experimental scientist and flyer; perhaps my own skeleton would find its resting place amongst these naked silent hills. Unpleasant thoughts, but I was of a school that would go down fighting.

That I excited curiosity was evident. Probably these men had never seen a man of my great bulk and stature until now. They pointed to my curly blond hair, to my clothes, making abrupt remarks about them in their rudimentary

speech, as far as I was able to surmise.

Their leader approached me questioning me in their speech, but I signified that I could not understand.

Upon finding that no immediate harm was intended me, I set out to learn the language. I seemed to be under the surveillance of the leader, who was called Ig.

I learned the habits of these ferocious, untamed men, marveled at their prodigious strength and gained a knowledge of their superstitions and weaknesses. When the surface of the land would be lashed by the occasional fierce electric storms that occur here, they would hide in the caves, cowering in abject terror. They could not understand the fact that I showed no fear in the face of the fury of the elements, that I seemed to delight in the display of lightning.

Ig informed me that I was being taken to Urg, chief of all Dars, for such is the name by which they call themselves, that with Urg rested my fate. He also told me quite candidly, that I would probably be killed because of the part that I had taken in freeing the Verean, she, who had been captured for the leader himself, to be mated with him. He offered me the doubtful solace that Urg might keep me as a personal slave.

He always referred to Urg in a tone of veiled jealousy or hatred. After sounding him out I scattered the seeds of rebellion in his mind.

"HOW many of the Dar and how many of the chiefs can you control?" I asked.

"All of the younger men and chiefs," he replied. "Urg grows old, he cannot fight as well as he could, but so great has been his prowess in the past that none dare to challenge him. Any chief may challenge for the supreme rule of the tribe at any time, but such is his great strength that even I have never dared to fight him."

"I can show you how to beat him," I advised him. Thus since the beginning of time has intelligence toyed with brute strength and stupidity. "From the magic of my people, I can show you tricks with which you can overpower this man, no matter how strong he may be. You can become the Great Chief among the Dar, living in the largest cave and having many shes. All the men of your race will stand in awe of the things that I can teach to you. In return for this you can save me from the terrible torture and death that I believe awaits me."

I had awakened the lust for power, as I had desired. Already the slow moving brain of Ig was visualizing himself clad in the glories of the leading chief, he was not intelligent enough to see the guile that lay behind the promises that I had made.

Having persuaded him that I could make him invincible, I concentrated his instruction on a few of the more choice and deadly tricks of Jiu-Jitsu, as taught by the Kodokwan. I had seen this particular form of combat used many times in my life and knew it to be singularly effective.

The Dar seem to have no scientific method of fighting, desiring only to get their opponent in their powerful grasp and crush his bones, at the same time using jaws and teeth to tear and rend. I knew that if Ig was capable of learning the rudiments of the science, that he would whip the other man, who had none.

Although very much above the average Dar in intelligence, Ig learned his lessons slowly, forgetting them between times and reverting to his natural mode of attack. Each new trick had to be practised many times before the knowledge would stay with him until the next lesson. I almost despaired of success, but he had the desire to learn and finally I began to see improvement. He never forgot his desire to rule the savage hordes of the star-lit lands. If the rest of the band

wondered where we disappeared to upon the occasion of these lessons, they never followed or asked questions. Just a little removed from the plane of beasts, their thoughts seem to be centered for the most part in the present—full belly and a place to sleep. Against a common enemy they can and do band together; so also does a pack of wolves. They are held together loosely under the leadership of a great chief, who retains his place of power by brute strength and ferocity. Each roaming clan has its own chief who is responsible to the higher chief to a certain degree.

Although Ig was a powerful and well-developed specimen of Dar, I discovered that with my much greater speed and knowledge I would stand a very good chance in serious combat with him, if I could keep out of the clutches of the terribly strong arms. The Sen Lev can not move very fast.

We were entering the inland valley where the Dar have their more or less permanent abode, though they roam over very great sections of the land. One day an event happened that enhanced my prowess in the eyes of Ig. Perhaps nearing the end of the journey, the party grew negligent.

WE entered a small glade through which ran a small stream and ate a meal. Then the leader decided to camp here and finish the journey in another march. It so happened that this particular valley had but one outlet. Hardly were we settled when the occupants of the place entered their lair. A pair of beasts faced us that were quite similar to the rhinoceros and considerably larger in size. They were returning from their feeding grounds and were not at all pleased to find their home invaded. The Sen Lev were in a panic! These great beasts are armored with a thick, scaly hide. Stones and clubs make no impres-

sion upon them, and when they charge no living animal of Mercury can halt them.

"What are they," I asked of the leader, never having seen anything like them.

"Ogeth," he replied. When they charge many will die. There is no way out except where they stand."

I still held a trump. Strapped to my body was a pistol that these men had overlooked when they had taken me. I was saving it for a final desperate bid for freedom, but must use it now since, in the narrow quarters here, there seemed little chance to escape the trampling hoofs otherwise. The Dar were attempting to scale the slopes. There was no way out in that direction.

"Seek what cover you can!" cried Ig.

I drew the pistol and stood my ground. The range was still too great for me to use the small weapon with accuracy. The pair came on at a gallop, the smaller, the male, in the lead. When this one was less than fifty yards away I opened fire, aiming at the joint of the neck. I knew that the bullets had gone home as the beast stopped in his charge, staggered on a few yards and dropped. The other one, perplexed, stopped its charge, turned and sped out of my sight. I made no attempt to kill it as I wished to save my limited number of cartridges.

I put the pistol away. Had my captors seen it? I hoped that in their fear and excitement that it had passed unnoticed. I wanted to retain possession of it very badly.

I could make a break for freedom now, but we had been on the trail in the semi-darkness for so long a time, that I doubted my ability to retrace it. I was not sure that David had been killed or captured. If they had not taken him, I knew that sooner or later he would search for me and could locate a large band easily, where he was most certain to miss one man.

I WAS interested in studying this strange land and these strange men. All my life I had wished to study nature under these conditions. On earth many of the large animals still live in the forests of southern Asia, but they have been hunted to such an extent that they have become very hard to approach. Here was life in the beginning, a world just emerging from chaos, each day brought forth new wonders in flora and fauna. That I might be put to death as a result of my curiosity was quite probable, but I decided to take the chance.

The Dar now came forward from where they had been hiding at the rear of the valley and uncertainly approached the great beast laying on the ground. "Dead," said the leader of the band, yet seeming not to realize the fullness of the fact. "How did you slay this fierce creature, from which the men of Dar flee in dread?"

"Magic," I answered shortly. "The magic of the race that lives beyond the stars."

Prior to this time the Dar had not believed me when I had said that I was from a different world, but now they seemed convinced. I came near to being a deity, though these savages have no religion. This would fall in line with what I wished, minimizing the likelihood of my being put to death.

Soon we entered the council valley, headquarters of the Dars, when back from their nomadic wanderings over the land in all directions. A huge mesa stood at the head of the valley. The level ground below was filled with barbarians, the mountains that lined the side of the valley were honeycombed with caves which housed them. Bones of eaten prey lay strewn over the valley floor.

The great chief holds forth here and always has large numbers of the Dar present. Word of our coming had been received and we hustled through the

crowds directly to the council circle at the top of the bluff. The chiefs were assembled there, and the main body of our party left us at the base of the mesa. Ig, a lesser chief and myself going on alone.

THERE was no ritual here, no beating of drums, no witch-doctors or war paint. The Dars had not progressed to this point of evolution. They squatted on their haunches in a circle in the center of which sat Urg, great commander since none had ever been strong enough to kill him. Around were the carcasses of beasts great and small, when one of the council felt the pangs of hunger, which was often, he would leave the circle, get a portion of meat and return to his place to eat it. It was feast and conference at the same time.

Not even a fire was burning, since none of the Dars had ever made a flame until I had shown Ig how to do so, and he had learned the value of cooked food.

It was such a scene as may have had its duplication on earth in ages past, before man had learned to plan for the future.

We stepped within the circle and approached the Great Chief. When we stood before this power Ig made a curious gesture that I surmised to be of obeisance. I held myself ready to shoot my way through the circle and to the shelter of the caves and passageways that honeycomb the surrounding hills killing as many as got in my way, but counting on my speed, of which they knew nothing, to get me away should the argument go against me.

The Great Chief spoke. "Word has come to me, O Ig, that the large Zuth," (Evidently he thought that I was of some Mercurian race) "has robbed me of a white she. Why was he not torn to pieces at the time?"

"The white giant knows much magic,

O master of all, I brought him to you that he might be your slave. He can make a serpent larger than the Eld, one that sails through the air and obeys him. He slays the great Ogeth with a little stick. He has shown me how to make the lightning with rocks that I may be able to cook the flesh of the beasts that I kill and make them taste better."

"All this I know, yet for his part in freeing the she, he shall die by my own hand. This she had more courage than the others, who always died of fright. Not so this one. But for him and the other one, she would now be mated to Urg. Then the black one escaped from Arl. Now I shall kill the one that you have brought."

"If you do not hold him as your slave then I shall keep him as my own by right of capture," answered Ig.

The jabbering council grew still, so suddenly had the challenge been made. None of them had thought that Ig would dare to oppose the leader.

Urg leaped to his feet. "No man can challenge the great Urg," he roared.

"Any chief can fight you for the leadership of the tribe. I do so for that and for the possession of the white man."

ALL the chiefs stepped back to give the combatants more room. The older man, contemptuous of his adversary, rushed in to make a quick finish, a crushing hold by one of his great strength would break the bones of the other. He was met by a short stabbing finger blow to the eye, which stung him and drew forth from him an angry grunt. Maddened, he went berserk, but all his rushes were met with the cruel blows of Kodokwan and well placed kicks. Finally he seemed to realize that he could not cope with this style of battle by strength alone and became more cautious. There followed a time of considerable duration when they maneuvered about, the chief

waiting for the opportunity to get a sure hold, Ig weaving in and out, concentrating his attack toward the other's eyes. Then came the break, the younger man slipped or stumbled and fell to the ground. Before he could regain his feet, the other was upon him, his large hands fastened in the throat of Ig, his teeth sunk into the shoulder. I thought that this was the end and reached for my pistol! But Ig made good use of the knowledge that I had taught him, his arms came up through in the Jiu-Jitsu break for the choking hold. Soon he was free and on his feet, but badly hurt. One arm hung limp and useless, where the fangs of Urg had torn the muscles. Yet he could win in spite of the handicap. The older man was not only nearly exhausted, but hopelessly discouraged as well. Never before had an enemy succeeded in breaking his hold, once he had obtained it. Realizing this, Ig unleashed a furious attack upon him, finally sending home a blow to the base of the brain. The other dropped to the ground, completely out.

THE other chiefs fully expected that Ig would kill the other as he lay there helpless, but to the surprise of all, he did not do this. Instead he waited till the fallen man had regained his senses and then shouted for the attention of the council. "Chiefs of the Dar, I am Great Chief now. I do not kill needlessly, if Urg will obey my commands he may live, otherwise I must kill him." Turning to

Urg, he asked, "What say you, Urg, you are still a chief but no longer a Great Chief."

"What can I say?" the other replied. "Since to live I must follow your commands and I wish to live."

"From now on," the new leader told them, "no Dar may kill another to eat, the strange one has shown me that we can save the kill of times of plenty to use when famine stalks throughout the land. Many other things has he shown to me. He shall stay, not as a slave but as Ketang, great adviser. The council is over.

"Go your ways and do not forget the things that I have told you."

The chiefs soon left. The events of the last short hour were beyond their powers of reasoning but by their attitudes I could see that they would not soon forget. They were thinking creatures now, which was a great step forward out of the darkness of the past.

Ig took me to the caves of the deposed leader. I dispatched two of his retinue to gather some of a pulpy weed that I had noticed growing in abundance here. I had seen that the animals of the forest, when wounded, would chew this herb, licking their wounds while its juices were still in the mouth. None of the Dar seemed to have the shrewdness to do this. My emissaries returned with what I desired, and I made a poultice for Ig's wound, which wound was very bad and would soon have become infected if it did not receive attention.

END OF PART I

We wish to correct an error appearing in our September issue.

"The Molecule Trapper" was written by Donald Matheson.

The First Flight

By JOE W. SKIDMORE

DONALD CALVERT suddenly began to tremble. His shaking hands lost their grip upon the plane's control stick. A numbing, crushing fear had swooped without warning into Calvert's brain. Perspiration streamed down bronzed, lean cheeks—a horrible sweat in spite of the terrific cold of mid-Atlantic. Calvert was flashing through the air at six hundred miles per hour—faster than man had yet traveled. Calvert was attempting a round-the-world non-stop flight. Thirty-two hours of blind rocketing through terrific blizzards and sleet had been accomplished before by the gallant Calvert. Many times he had flashed with thundering wings for hours on some desperate flight, without any undue feeling of trepidation. But this time it was strangely different—uncanny.

Calvert had a weird feeling that some invisible presence rode with him in the speeding plane. He became certain as a warm, prickly sensation ran over him. It was as though he were near a great electrical generator of immense power. The air was filled with static energy. The terrific vibration of the racing motors seemed suddenly and queerly to be attuned to the presence.

Then a new horror came for the famous transatlantic flyer as his keen eyes swept the instrument board.

His two compasses were useless—gyrating wildly!

The unseen thing that rode uninvited was affecting the magnetic instruments. The stout fighting heart of Calvert struggled valiantly, but the deadly, numbing

horror of fear crept further into his brain.

Desperately he tried to pull himself together, but his usually keen brain seemed stupid—atrophied.

Old, nearly forgotten lore of mystic things came slowly to his tortured memory—Gorgons, Chimeras and Hydras. Perhaps the spirit of Icarus, who melted his waven wings against Phaethon, was riding at his side in the cold cock-pit. Some departed spirit, gone insane, was seeking to destroy him. Perhaps he had once too often sneered at Thanatos, the cruel God of Death. How he wished that his old friend, Kent, mystic, occultist and scientist, were with him.

A new terror crept into his mind as the swift monoplane began to spin downward—out of control.

In desperation Calvert recalled his last goodbye to Kent. The last words of the mystic, Kent, burned suddenly in his consciousness.

"Donald, I know you are as fearless as Theseus slaying the Minotaur. You do not know physical fear. But some time, some place, mental fear will come to you. Your strange adventures and experiments with fearful speeds will some time bring you under unearthly influences. Perhaps you will contact another dimension. You are going to fly nearly as fast as sound waves travel. Something may happen at that velocity. Here is a highly concentrated liquid I have prepared. Should you ever feel your reason slipping, or that you have burst into another dimensional world, swallow one globule of the liquid. You know, Donald, my lad, that the great

Einstein and other scientists have ruled that as the speed of an object increases, the size of the object decreases. Perhaps it is that when you attain a velocity of seven hundred miles an hour, some anatomical changes will take place in your body. It is absolutely certain that your size will be slightly decreased. It is entirely possible that this anatomical change will produce mystical or dimensional changes. The liquid is made up of protons and electrons like any other substance; but the electrons in this liquid are revolving at incomprehensible speeds. The rotations in their orbits are so swift, that they will change for a split second the orbital speed of the electrons that are but the matter in your body. True, the incredible speed of the electrons in the liquid will soon dissipate as their momentum is absorbed by the liquid.

"But, my friend, Don, in that split second you will be precipitated into another dimension. Perhaps you will live for an instant in a past life—in any dimension beyond our known three, anything is possible; time and place would mean nothing. Anyway, my friend, if you ever have an emergency or catastrophe where death seems certain, take a capsule."

With a Herculean effort Calvert struggled to regain his mental power. Fifteen thousand feet! read the altimeter. In a few seconds the heavy plane would hurtle like a spent arrow into the cold, heaving sea.

It required all of Calvert's will-power to remove his gloves and take from a small phial a tiny globule of Kent's liquid. He placed the globule in his mouth and swallowed.

Instantly it seemed as if his whole body had exploded—that the plane no longer existed. His senses reeled, and for a seeming second he was unconscious.

After a bit Calvert's brain began to function—but strangely. Where was he? His hands felt of his hard, strong body. Where did the hair come from that covered his body? Then as his great sinewy hands fingered a stone axe, a vagrant memory that was cons old came to him.

Suddenly he laughed loudly in a great, croaking voice.

"Why, of course. I am Dowb."

* * * * *

Dowb, a leader among the first humans, stood gazing uneasily across a great swift river. A strange and mighty urge spurred his small brain. The vague but powerful emotion seemed to tug at his heart.

Many times Dowb had stood at the edge of that crustacean and reptile-infested stream to wave hungrily at a primitive girl across the water. Woman-hunger was gnawing keenly at Dowb.

For years some impelling force had urged Dowb to cross that mysterious river. Life to him, with its horrible dangers and incomprehensible purposes, was a mighty problem. What instinct, what force dominated our courageous ancestor and guided him to mighty deeds, that he might keep aflame the torch of human life? Millions of years later brothers, as courageous as Dowb, Columbus and Lindbergh, gazed across great waters and they, too, felt the same overwhelming longing to conquer the unknown.

Dowb's small eyes, deep-socketed for protection, were keenly focused to vast distances; even the faintly glimmering intellect of our first ancestor knew that the feminine figure, far across the impassible stream, was partly responsible for his unrest and yearning. At last the distant, squat, hardy, desired object of Dowb's affection retreated into the steaming jungle of sweating shrubs

and trees that grew with amazing rapidity.

Even as our gigantic ancestor turned away with a love-sick gurgle, his sinewy, strong left arm swooped with incredible speed into a thermal stream at his feet. Like a dog bolting raw liver he wolfed the unwary, sluggish fish.

He glanced in every direction, for Dowb lived in a fearsome, bizarre world of vast vertebrated monsters. Huge, incredible lizards and saurians, that regarded Dowb as a tender morsel, were on every hand.

It was highly dangerous territory, and Dowb was far from his tribe. He had risked his life a thousand times to catch a glimpse of the lovely lady across the water.

A warm, moist breeze suddenly stirred Dowb's long, ragged hair. He gulped into his vast lungs an incredible breath through great nostrils.

Truly, our cousin was built for sudden and strenuous effort. Sampson would have coveted the great corded arms that hung far below sturdy, scarred knees.

Stepping lithely through giant fungi and ferns, Dowb rapidly approached the forest that meant a more desirable factor of safety.

Came a mighty sound—the ghastly rattling of dry, dead bones.

From the leaden, clouded, misty skies rattled a fearful threnody of clacking wings.

The small brain of Dowb struggled slowly—painfully. He knew he was trapped; no chance to dash to the protecting forest.

The terrific, gigantic lizard that flew, having webs for feathers—a winged terror that even to Dowb was a nightmare horror—hurtled like a projectile out of the soupy, tepid air.

Pulling strange, guttural sounds, Dowb, who knew not the meaning of fear, dropped his great hulk of fighting sinew

and brawn into a welcome depression.

The fanged jaws of the reptile closed with an eager metallic snap barely above the hairy back of Dowb, who instantly leaped to his feet.

Like a gigantic, gibbering ape, Dowb hurled forth guttural insults, violently swinging his mighty club. The enraged flying lizard, fully one hundred feet long, made a slow, banking turn and again dashed towards Dowb.

Crash! sounded the strong club, as it splintered against the great horny breast of the reptile. Although weighing many tons, the force of that terrific blow grounded the Pterodactyl. For a second it threshed about, rolling, tumbling, and struggling; its gigantic horned tail swept around in a mighty arc. It struck Dowb high in the thigh, hurling him skyward like a stone from a catapult. With an inherited instinct from ancestors who had clutched at tree-tops, Dowb sailed through the air, hands outstretched, claw-like, ready to grasp.

For a moment the slow brain of Dowb fancied he had been hurled into a tree, as his sinewy arms and legs grasped an obstruction that had brought him up abruptly in mid-flight.

But the object moved and swooped crazily, and Dowb realized that he had grasped the neck of the beast directly below its repulsive head.

Dowb reasoned slowly and painfully. Instinctively his glance darted to earth. Suddenly he clutched his arms and legs even more tightly around the beast. The earth was far below!

The giant reptile had risen into the air with clacking, swishing wings.

For once in his hazardous life of our first brother, he was greatly afraid, but clung the more tenaciously to his perilous perch.

Then anger—man's primary instinct in prehistoric days—seeped into Dowb's brain, and with all the fine muscles at

his command, he began to tighten inexorably his strangling hold. The beast flew heavily onward, and now, glancing below, Dowb could see the glinting, leaden surface of the river. Dowb had always been able to extricate himself from a dangerous situation, with a sudden blow of his club or stone axe, but now his grotesque peril spurred him mentally, and he began to reason for the first time in his life.

He darted a glance about. He and his Bizarre Pegasus were now directly over the center of the river.

A sudden thought came into Dowb's mind like a slow motion picture—that he was going to the lovely one who had waved at him across the river. Then again that mysterious instinct that carried our forefathers onward against terrific odds swept over Dowb, and his great, hairy, right hand flashed to the thonged belt at his waist, to grasp the heavy stone axe.

The axe flashed high against the ruby rays of an evening sun and thudded crunchingly against the back of the beast's head. Some uncanny inherent knowledge of anatomy told Dowb to strike where the vertebrae joined the head, and soon the tough hide and flesh of the beast were a bloody mass under the mighty strokes of Dowb's sharp, heavy weapon. Chips of bone and reeking flesh splattered Dowb's snarling face.

The beast, massive though it was, began to waver in its flight. Terrific, shattering blows were beginning to tell. The reptile seemed to know that it must reach the shore, where it might alight and shake off its terrible adversary. It began to glide downward toward the bank.

Dowb noted and began to chop more fiercely. Finally, with a last powerful blow, the sharp blade became detached from its wooden handle, but the edged stone remained fixed in a vertebra.

Twenty feet above the ground the beast dropped its elongated neck and crashed to the soft earth. Its first threshing convulsions tossed Dowb many feet away, but he alighted like a great cat on all fours, unhurt, angry and dangerous.

He took a last look at the writhing reptile and then, without a backward glance, strode swiftly towards an opening in the forest.

A feminine figure rose from behind a tree, and with awe and almost reverence in her deep-set eyes that gleamed through tangled locks, came forward timidly, crouchingly.

Dowb snarled at her, then beckoned impatiently—affectionately—and the two figures vanished together into the forest.

Phaethon, the sun god, eons old, reasoning that it was a day's work well done, smiled happily as he, too, disappeared below the horizon.

* * * * *

Donald Calvert snapped painfully back into the world of consciousness. Miraculously, his keen judgment was instantly normal. The flying instinct and skill born of many hundred hours in the air had returned.

The uncanny presence—the something—was gone!

Like a flash Calvert remembered. He was in a bad spin!

Laughing with old time courage, his eyes swept the instruments. Five thousand feet! and dropping like a comet!

With a light and sure heart, Calvert kicked the rudder against the rotation of the spin; pushed the stick forward—then slowly back. The great plane came to normal flying position with a wing testing snap.

Then Calvert turned full power to the great motors, that roared out a mighty orchestration of power—and the glorious hopes of man.

Suddenly as though a strong light were cast in a darkened room, Calvert dropped from the storm and clouds into gentle, peaceful air. Below heaved a calm and quiet Atlantic, above which raged a terrible storm. Nearly a mile under the now speeding plane a tiny boat floated—a fishing dory. In its bow one fisherman stood up and waved excitedly.

But Calvert did not see the tiny figure, for he was staring with amazed eyes at Phaethon, just now dropping from sight behind the distant, curving horizon.

"Why, I've seen the sun go down twice this day."

Calvert shouted the words joyously as he cleverly ruddered the plane till the compasses indicated true north—mystic north.

Then grinning happily—confidently—Calvert advanced the throttles to full speed.

He sped onward—

"Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow." *Shakespeare—"Midsummer Night's Dream."*

THE END

What do you know?

1. What does the word atmosphere mean? (See page 10.)
2. What did the first analysis of air reveal as to its composition? (See page 10.)
3. What do leaves of plants exhale when in sun-light? (See page 11.)
4. What principal gases does air contain other than oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide? (See page 12.)
5. Who discovered argon and what led to its discovery? (See page 12.)
6. What poisonous gases could be produced from the air we breathe? (See page 12.)
7. What is the great natural source of nitric acid? (See page 13.)
8. What is the obvious fallacy in the story entitled "The Moon Waits?" (No page number.)
9. How are giants and midgets accounted for? (See page 66.)
10. Can any connection be drawn between the relative prevalence of midgets and of the presence of iodine compounds in drinking water? (See page 66.)
11. What is the name of the secretion of the thyroid gland? (See page 66.)
12. How may an amoeba be described? (See page 67.)
13. How does an amoeba obtain its nourishment? (See page 67.)
14. What is the center of an amoeba called? (See page 72.)
15. What distribution of light and darkness obtains on the planet, Mercury? (See page 78.)
16. What temperature may exist on the lighted surface of Mercury? (See page 78.)
17. Is the gravitational attraction of Mercury greater or less than that of earth? (See page 81.)
18. What is said to have happened to Icarus in his fabled flight in the air? (See page 92.)
19. What relation has been said to exist between the size of a moving body and its rate of motion? (See page 93.)
20. What is the sap of the India rubber tree called? (See page 105.)
21. What is the composition of common clay? (See page 106.)
22. What is diorite? (See page 106.)

Through the Andes

By A. HYATT VERRILL

This is the conclusion of Mr. Verrill's story of South American archæology, sprinkled with considerable adventure and with some admirable depictions of character. We are sure that our readers will be sorry to part with the explorers in this story, so well described that we feel that we have lived with them.

CONCLUSION

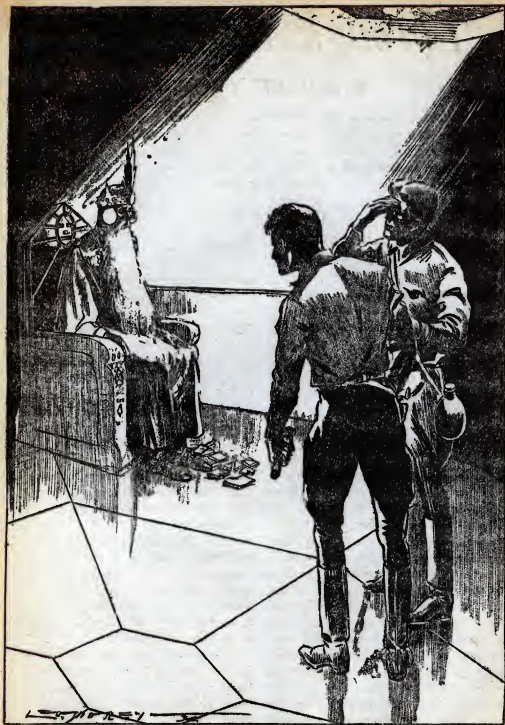
CHAPTER VIII

Red's Courtship

THESE is no need to describe in detail all that occurred during the day which followed our arrival at Achcarunasapi. We were shown over the temple and the citadel, and while Red and Saunderson were filled with admiration and wonder at the the magnificence, the immensity and the beauty of the state buildings and the high state of culture revealed by them, their emotions were nothing compared to my own. Here were structures, similar to those which hitherto I had known only as deserted crumbling ruins, with all their contents, their furnishings and their treasures intact, with their mosaics, their frescoes and their tapestries untouched by time or vandals' hands. An intense fury filled my heart at the thought of the Spaniards having looted, and stripped scores, yes hundreds, of such buildings in their ruthless wanton campaign of destruction, leaving them but empty, forsaken shells. To me, the buildings with their contents were far more than imposing, richly furnished structures. They were archaeological treasure-houses, and I realized that weeks, months, even years might be profitably devoted to studying and in-

vestigating them. Indeed, all desire to leave the valley was forgotten in the enthusiasm and interest aroused by my surroundings. Never again would I have such an opportunity, and, I reflected, why should I not remain indefinitely? When I had set out on my expedition with the hope of finding traces of a pre-Incan civilization in the district, I had planned to be gone at least six months. And now, instead of traces, I had found the lost civilization itself; alive, thriving, vibrant, beyond all my dreams. I made up my mind to make the most of the opportunity, to remain until I had learned all it was possible to learn regarding the history, the life, the traditions and the arts of the people. And with Sarayacu's cooperation and his knowledge to aid me I should be in a position to write a monograph which would astound the scientific world. But would Saunderson be willing to remain? In as few words as possible I outlined my position and asked him.

"You're right, distinctly right—in regard to stopping here, I mean," he declared. "By all means seize the opportunity by the tail and hang onto it, old chap! 'There's a tide in the affairs of men,' and all that sort of thing, you know. And don't worry over me. I can kill time here as well as elsewhere. Must be game about, and if nothing else



The mummy upon the throne was that of an aged man, a man whose shrivelled, shrunken feet covered by jewelled sandals rested upon the mosaic floor. . . .

offers I might follow Red's suggestion and pot some of these Andean goats—have them turned loose on the mountain and stalk them, you know. When all's said and done it wouldn't be much worse than shooting pheasants in jolly old England. And it doesn't make a penny's worth of difference whether I'm away for six months or six years. I never bother my poor old nut over business matters anyway—my solicitors attend to all that sort of thing, and they are quite accustomed to my erratic behavior. By Jove, yes, go to it, old man, stop on as long as you wish. I fancy Red is a permanent fixture here—though really I can't picture him as a king—and I'm frightfully keen on seeing how matters develop under his sceptre. I suppose there will be a sceptre, don't you think? Besides—" he added with a grin and a chuckle—"it's a really delightful place. Excellent food, luxurious accommodations, charmingly friendly people, a salubrious climate, and plenty of lovely ladies! What more can a mere man ask?"

The citadel, where our conversation had taken place, was more in the nature of a government storehouse, arsenal and barracks than of a fortress. Great rooms were filled with grain, maize, dried meat and vegetables and other food stuffs, others were full of bales of llama, alpaca and vicuña wool, others with textiles, tools and various essentials, enough to have supported the entire population during a siege of months. Though only a scant dozen armed men were in charge, there were accommodations for housing a force of fully a thousand warriors, and the immense quantity of weapons—bronze battle-axes and spears, bows and arrows, stone-headed maces, bronze daggers; slings and sling-stones, and quilted cotton armor were proof that at one time a real standing army had been maintained. No

doubt, I thought, the legions had gone forth with Mank Keledin never to return, when as Sarayacu had told me, he had been called upon by the Inca. And with such a comparatively small population in the hidden valley, and with no militant ruler, an army never had been required. But these thoughts at once raised other problems in my mind. Why had the community dwindled? Why had that stupendous fortress with its vast, secret treasures been abandoned? What had become of the teeming inhabitants who must have existed, to account for their construction of such titanic works? I would have to wait, would have to question Sarayacu, to learn the answers to these riddles.

All that we had seen of rich magnificence was as nothing compared to the interior of the temple. And the fact that we were admitted within its sacred portals, and were treated like equals by the high priest, convinced me that Sarayacu was sincere in his reverent attitude towards us.

Red, who was still unable to believe that there were such treasures in the world, almost collapsed when we were ushered into the vast, circular hall scintillating with gold and ablaze with gems.

"Say, Doc, just kick me an' wake me up!" he exclaimed. "If this is where they go to church——"

"On your knees!" I commanded him, as following the priest's actions I knelt, and Saunderson did the same.

When Sarayacu again rose, and we had the opportunity to gaze about, Saunderson drew a long deep breath. "I wouldn't have missed this for anything," he declared. "I've seen most of the famous churches of the world, but 'pon my word, all of them together couldn't even approach this for beauty or wealth. Do you know when I read Prescott, I thought the old boy was letting his imagination run wild when he described

the Temple of the Sun at Cuzco. But, my sainted aunt! Why, the Cuzco temple must have been merely a tuppence ha'penny little chapel beside this."

"I think," I said, "that I'm beginning to see some light. Achcaruna-sapi—the birthplace of the multitudes of men! If I'm right, all the pre-Incan and Incan colonies were offshoots of this place. It must be the supposedly fabulous 'Navel of the World' of the old traditions. No wonder this temple is far ahead of even the one at Cuzco. It is what St. Peter's is to Roman Catholics, what Westminster is to the Church of England."

"I say, where did they secure such quantities of gold, do you suppose?" Saunderson asked me as we stood gazing at the enormous golden sun with its jewelled rays gleaming above the altar of polished marcasite.

"That," I told him, "has always been a puzzle, "but if my deductions are correct they must have had a secret and incredibly rich mine not far from here. And very probably most of the gold that was distributed through the country came from here. If——"

"Sufferin' catfish, let's find that mine!" cried Red. "I've done a heap of prospectin' in my time, an' we can stake our claims an' all be rich."

Saunderson guffawed. "Red, my lad, as a prospective sovereign you're a complete washout!" he exclaimed. "You're a second Oliver Twist, really you are. Always wanting more. My word, don't you realize that the mine is yours. that the contents of this temple are yours, that every bally thing in the valley belongs to Your Majesty! You're richer than Croesus or Henry Ford or the Shah of Persia. Yes, by Jove, and yet you couldn't purchase a box of matches or a package of cigarettes, regardless of how much you wanted them!"

Red's face fell. "Hell, what's the use

of bein' a millionaire if you can't buy nothin'?" he grumbled.

"Wealth," I informed him, "is merely a relative term. Where there is no poverty there can be no riches. Where there are no riches there can be no poverty. That was why, under the old Incas, gold had no intrinsic value, any more than it has here. It is merely ornamental, prized for its color, symbolic of the sun, and because it is readily worked and does not tarnish. But what difference does it make? After all, a millionaire in the world we know cannot purchase any more than you possess here. Food, clothing, a home, friends, luxuries——"

"DON'T forget the charming Cherisona!" cried Saunderson.

Sarayacu had been patiently waiting as we talked, listening intently, perhaps hoping to partly understand us by our tones of inflection. At the mention of Cherisona his face brightened.

"I have spoken unto the daughter of my daughter," he informed me. "I have told her that the Red-haired One has looked with favor upon her. Greatly is she honored, and most gladly will she be his queen. If it pleases the Red-haired One I, Sarayacu, priest-king of Urkon, will unite Cherisona to my lord on the day when he becomes our king."

"There you are!" cried Saunderson, when I had translated the priest's words. "Everything arranged for you, Red, my lad! No trouble about courting, no need to pop the jolly old question and all that sort of thing. Nothing like being a potentate and having a grand-daddy-in-law to act as a proxy in making love to one's enamorata, you know!"

"Yeah, well the padre's got another guess comin'," Red growled. "Me, I ain't lettin' no one do my love-makin' for me. If I can't get next to that Cherisona girl an' ask her will she team up with me,

the king business is off, an' you can tell that to the old padre for me, Doc.

Knowing Red's character I felt sure that complications would ensue if I did not arrange matters. So I spoke to the priest, and as diplomatically as possible I explained that Huata Pilcu—The Red-haired One—had barely seen the girl; that while she found favor in his eyes, he wished to meet her and see more of her before the matter went further. But I added—as I saw a slight frown on Sarayacu's wrinkled face—"as the Red-Haired One's councillor and Amautu, I could assure him that this was merely a formality, a custom of our own people, and that Cherisona was as good as queen already."

The priest's face cleared and he smiled. "The will of the Red-haired One is law," he said. "That very day, within the hour, his daughter's daughter would be conducted to the palace and the presence of her future husband."

"Array yourself like Solomon in all his glory, my lad!" grinned Saunderson when I told them of Saracayu's promise. "Nothing like making a stunning appearance, you know! And the ladies are fearfully keen on raiment. Do you require a valet? If so I'll loan you Karen for the occasion."

"Aw, shut up!" barked Red. "Maybe you can't put on your duds less'n you have a man to help you." Then, turning to me. "How about it, Doc? Have I gotta dress up in them fool duds for to see her?"

"I think it is advisable to do so," I told him. "I intend to wear the native garments from now on myself. And if Saunderson also uses the clothing provided for him you won't feel self-conscious. When in Rome do as the Romans do, you know."

I admit that as I donned the costume I selected from the assortment in the chest in my room, I felt as if I

were about to attend a masquerade ball.

When, clad in tunic and shorts of tan and blue with a *llantu* or head-band of crimson topped by a black and white plume, and by a happy inspiration wearing the golden talisman suspended by a cord about my neck, I appeared before Sam, his eyes rolled in wonder and admiration.

"Wha la!" he cried. "Ah didn't scarcely know yo,' Chief. Yo' is look like a king fo' sure. Yassar, takin' the fac's of the case in consid'ation, yo' is absolutely grandificant. Yassar, tha' what yo' is! An' no mistakin' 'bout it."

Entering Saunderson's room. I found him wearing a costume of blue and white with a necklet of gleaming sapphires and a plume of white egrettes. The costume was most becoming and I told him so.

"Really?" he exclaimed. "Thanks awfully, old chap. I feel the perfect fool, you know. Dash it all, why don't they have a mirror in the place? But you're actually quite splendid yourself, you know! By Jove, I *am* keen on seeing how dear, old Red will appear. Let's toddle over and surprise him."

We found Red trying to get an idea of his appearance by his reflection in the golden incense burner. Apparently he had taken Saunderson's advice literally, for neither Solomon nor the lilies of the field had ever been arrayed more gorgeously than he. His costume, of buff with black and orange figures, was rich with gold embroidery. His sandals were embellished with gold and fire-opals. And on his fiery red hair he wore a circlet of gold with ear coverings set with emeralds, and with a scarlet and black plume above his forehead. He turned as we entered, and despite my efforts I could not suppress a laugh as I saw the cartridge belt about his waist and the two heavy revolvers resting against his thighs.

"OH, I say!" cried Saunderson, striving to control his merriment. "One doesn't go courting with heavy artillery, you know! Or do you plan to force the young lady to yield at point of pistol, old thing? But otherwise, my lad, you're perfectly stunning. Absolutely gorgeous, yes, really you are, You're——"

"Cut it out," barked Red. "You ain't took a squint at yourself yet, Mister. Say Doc, have I gotta put on them things? Jew'lry! Hell!"

He indicated a heap of glittering gold and gems.

I touched the gold disk on my own chest. "I'm wearing some and Saunderson is wearing a sapphire necklace worth a king's ransom," I told him. "As long as you are dressing the part you had better wear some of the ornaments. They are not only decorative but are insignia of rank."

"O. K.," he agreed reluctantly as he picked up a heavy gold wristlet and a collar of emeralds with a scapular of gold, "I'll wear the junk, but next thing you'll be sayin' I gotta use perum'ry. Why the blazes can't these Injuns wear shirts an' pants an' hats like other folks?"

"But, my dear Red," cried Saunderson, "just stop to consider! Can you picture the lovely Cherisona attired like 'other folks' as you put it? My word, no! Just think what you'd miss. Really——"

Red shied a gold bracelet at his head which, fortunately, the other dodged.

"Come on," I said, "It's time we left. I hear Sarayacu's voice. The princess is approaching."

"Toodlyoo, old top!" cried Saunderson as we stepped through the doorway. "Best of luck to you. Oh, by Jove! say, don't forget to have a ring ready!"

Sarayacu was standing with Cherisona by his side in the hallway. "By jove,

she is perfectly stunning!" whispered Saunderson as we passed. "But poor Red will throw a fit if the grandfather is going to act as chaperone."

"He isn't I said," as I glanced back and saw the priest emerging from the doorway. I chuckled. "Honestly," I said, "I'd give a good deal to see and hear how Red acts when he finds himself alone with the girl."

Saunderson grinned. "Leave it to him!" he said.

We didn't see Red again until we met at dinner, and for once Saunderson forbore from teasing him. In fact neither of us even referred to the matter of his tryst, by common consent waiting for him to broach the subject first. And I could tell by his face and his preoccupation that he was aching to confide in us. But it was not until the meal was over and I lit my pipe that he spoke.

"Well, we're a-goin' to team up," he announced at last. "I reckon she's as much stuck on me as me on her. Yep, it's all fixed. And say, Doc, I got you to thank for it. If I hadn't come along on this expedition I wouldn't never have met up with her. Holy smoke! It makes me get cold feet to think of what I'd have missed."

"CONGRATULATIONS, my lad!" cried Saunderson. "Really, I mean it. No spoofing, Red. You've picked a winner, honestly you have. Dash it all, if you hadn't got ahead of me I'd have gone after her myself, absolutely yes! Dammit, we should have some champagne to drink a toast to your future happiness. Deucedly poor substitute—this chicha. But here's to you both!" He rose to his feet and raised his silver cup.

Red grinned, and flushed even more scarlet than usual, as we clinked the goblets and drank.

"Mebbe you'll be meetin' up with

some nice girl yet," he said to Saunderson. "There's a heap of 'em here."

Saunderson shook his head. "Ah, that is the rub!" he exclaimed. "There are too many of the darlings. It's like trying to pick out a shirt at a haberdashery, but a jolly sight worse. One can purchase the whole bally stock of shirts, but one can't take on all the young ladies, you know!"

"How did you manage to understand one another?" I enquired. "That is—" I hastened to add—"if it isn't too intimate a question."

Red grinned. "I don't mind tellin' you, Doc," he said. "An' mebbe it'll help Mister Saunderson when he starts makin' up to one of these girls. It was dead easy. I just pointed to myself and then to her and smacked my lips like I was kissin'. An' she blushed an' pointed to me an' then to herself an' put out her lips an'—Oh hell—you know the rest!"

"Simplicity itself!" declared Saunderson. "Idyllic! How I have wasted my time and talents in the past! 'Pon my word, Red, you've simplified life for me in the future. Really, you know, you're a genius, positively you are!"

CHAPTER IX

An Epochal Discovery

FOR the next few days we saw little of Sarayacu, for the priest was more than busy with preparations for the coronation and royal wedding soon to be celebrated. But time did not hang heavily on our hands. Red, of course, chafed at the delay, but Saunderson, who was rapidly acquiring a working knowledge of the Hualla dialect, enjoyed himself thoroughly. His easy, flippancy manner and good nature won the smiles and friendship of the people wherever he went, and his blonde skin and yellow hair brought open admiration from the girls and women. And

when he discovered that there were bears and wild goats on the neighboring hills, he at once became again the ardent, big game hunter. The first time that the natives of the valley heard a gunshot they were filled with terror and came rushing to the temple in dismay. In fact there came near being a riot, and even Sarayacu was so terrified that he grovelled at our feet, although I had explained beforehand that Saunderson was going to kill the beasts by thunderbolts from his strange weapons. Nothing I could say could calm them or allay their fear, and then Red came to my rescue and by homeopathic treatment completely cured the people of their aboriginal terror of firearms.

"Say, Doc, try to make 'em savvy that there ain't no danger of gettin' hurt, lessen we aim to hurt 'em," he said. "Tell 'em if I'm goin' to be king they gotta trust me. An' tell 'em I'm goin' to show 'em. Hell, I've seed many a hoss that was gun-shy, but I ain't never seen one couldn't be cured by shootin' alongside of him till he got over bein' scairt, an' I don't reckon these folks has got less sense than a bronc. So here goes!"

Whipping out his revolvers, Red fired into the air as fast as he could pull trigger. At the crashing reports of his pistols the people fell flat on their faces fairly paralyzed with terror. But as the detonations continued and nothing happened, curiosity and wonder overcame fear, until presently, all their terror had fled and they were merely gazing at Red with reverent awe. But the Texan wasn't satisfied.

"Reckon it's a mighty good time to show 'em a gun ain't all noise," he muttered. "Tell 'em to keep their eyes onto that buzzard up there." As the people, not knowing what to expect, gazed at the circling vulture, Red fired. And as the big bird came like a plummet to the

earth, a deep sigh of awe came from the assembled throng. But they neither yelled with terror, nor did they run. They were no longer "gun shy" as Red put it; but they had learned that while the report of a fire arm was harmless, yet in the hands of the Red-haired One and his comrades swift death could be dealt by the weapons when desired.

But I have digressed. As I said, Saunderson found plenty to amuse himself with, and as for me, I was never more busily and more pleasantly occupied in my life. Not an hour, no, not a minute of the day passed that I did not make some new discovery or solve some long-vexed question that had puzzled archaeologists for years. But how I longed for a camera! How I missed the ability to secure photographic records of the people, the buildings, the occupations of the inhabitants! But most fortunately I had a small notebook, and being familiar with shorthand, I could record a great deal in a very limited space. And then I made a discovery compared to which all the others seemed trifling.

I had wandered across the valley, and approaching a dyke of rock which appeared to have been quarried, I came to a group of sheds which was obviously a stone cutters' yard. All about were great piles of many-angled blocks of stone, sculptured columns and lintels, intricately cut monuments, and figures of human beings and beasts. But something was lacking about the place. Then, suddenly, I realized that although a number of men were busily at work there was no appreciable noise, no ringing of hammers on chisels, no tapping on stone. For a moment I was puzzled. Had I become suddenly deaf? I wondered. Then my eyes became fixed upon the artisans plying their trade, and I stood speechless, thunderstruck. The men were using wooden tools! They were

not tapping with hammers or chisels. Instead, they were hewing, cutting, carving the stone with as much apparent ease as if the flint-hard diorite had been damp clay. It was incredible, impossible, inconceivable! I felt dazed, unable to credit my senses, as if in some weird dream. I stepped forward, stretched out my hand, and half-expecting to wake up, I touched the stone. I leaped back as if struck. My finger had sunk into the surface of diorite as readily as though the rock had been putty!

FAIRLY trembling with excitement I drew my knife and placed the point of the blade against the spot where the impression of my finger was clearly visible. With scarcely an effort I pushed the blade for a depth of perhaps half an inch into the stone. Then it stopped as if it struck against a bar of iron. Something told me I was on the verge of a momentous discovery, but another lobe of my brain assured me that I was going mad. Regardless of the curious stares of the workmen about me, I began digging into the rock with my knife blade. In a moment I had removed several square inches of the surface and had revealed a core of hard solid rock. What did it mean? Had the surface of the stone decomposed leaving the central part intact? I examined one of the carved monoliths. The surface was harder than granite. Yet there, within a few feet of where I stood, a man was whittling, gouging, carving a mass of the same stone with wooden implements! My brain was in a turmoil. I turned to the fellow. "Tell me what wonder is this?" I demanded. "How is it that the stone you cut is soft, yet those about you are hard?"

He gazed at me, a puzzled look upon his face, and shook his head. "Forgive me, my lord," he said, "but I understand you not. Truly there is no wonder. If

the stone were not soft how then could it be carved into the shape desired? And the others are hard because they have been completed and Inti, the sun, has smiled upon them. No man might cut them now; they will endure forever."

Evidently the man did not grasp my meaning. I strove to control my impatience, to make myself more clearly understood, to put the query in more simple words. "But you do not understand!" I told him. "What I wish to know is *why* the stone is soft."

A light of understanding spread over his features. "But my lord!" he replied. Of a truth it is soft so that we may cut and carve it."

Another man, who had been examining some of the cut stones now approached. He was a more intelligent looking fellow, a sort of foreman, I decided.

"My lord is interested in our work?" he enquired. "What is it that my lord wishes explained?"

"I wish to learn by what magic these stones are soft," I told him. "How it comes to pass that while those which are finished are as hard as the cliffs whence they were quarried, those upon which the men labor are cut with wood?"

He appeared vastly surprised at my question. "There is naught of magic, my lord," he declared. "It is the will of Wira Kocha, the Creator of all things, that it should be so. Does not the rain fall upon the parched earth and render it mud, yet when the sun shines forth does the mud not become the hard earth once more? Is not dampened clay moulded by the potter's hands to form whatsoever he desires, yet when the sun smiles upon the vessels he has wrought, and they are heated in the fire, do they not become as hard as the stone? Yet there is no magic in the one or the other, my lord. It is the way we and our fathers and our fathers' fathers have

ever worked in stone. Truly there is no other way, for no man might cut the stone to form were it to remain hard. As the potter damps his clay that he may mould it, so we damp the stone that it may be cut and moulded to shape. But the potter needs naught but water while we must use the *Winipacha*."

I understood him well enough. He had made his meaning perfectly clear—that the stone was softened and after being cut was again hardened. But I refused to credit any such ridiculous statement. Yet, there were the men gouging off the stone with wooden tools. Unless . . . the foreman's words broke into my train of confused thoughts.

"PERCHANCE my lord would care to see the stone softened by the *Winipacha*," he suggested. Would I! Only the evidence of my eyes would convince me such a thing was possible. He led me to a larger shed nearer the quarry. In the centre was a great trough filled with a milky-looking liquid or rather semi-liquid resembling the fresh latex from the rubber tree. All about were workmen. Some were piling roughly-cut stones, fresh from the quarry, but most of them were busily coating the surfaces of stones with the viscid, dirty-white material from the trough. Tense with suppressed excitement I stepped close to one of these laborers. With my knife blade I tested a portion of the stone untouched by the strange material. It was hard, flinty. As the man gazed at me in amazement I drew the steel blade along the surface towards the area the man had treated. I almost yelled. As the blade reached the spot that had been coated with the liquid the point sank for an eighth of an inch into the diorite! I felt almost faint. Unless I had taken leave of my senses I had seen a miracle wrought! Unless I were bewitched or

dreaming or mad, that thick white material possessed the power of softening the rock as readily as water softens clay! For a space I was too overcome with wonder, too dazed by the momentous discovery to think coherently. But gradually my brain cleared and commenced to function in normal fashion. After all, I reasoned, was it so incredible, so beyond the bounds of reason? Chemically, the stone and clay were very similar. Clay was merely decomposed rock, largely composed of silica and feldspar, derived from massive rocks. And diorite was igneous, a combination of soda-lime feldspar and hornblende. And if ordinary water could soften clay, which would again harden when exposed to the sun, why shouldn't there be some solvent that would have the same effect upon the rock itself before it had become decomposed? I could see no scientific reason why such a thing was not only possible but reasonable. No, the more I thought of it, the more I wondered that archaeologists had not suggested such a solution of the mystery of the Incan and pre-Incan stone works. And the more I marveled that some of our scientists or chemists had not discovered such a simple means of working refractory stone. But it was none the less an epochal discovery I had made, none the less intensely interesting. And what was the composition of the solvent? Was it of mineral or vegetable origin? And how had these people, or rather their ancestors, discovered it? Sudden recollection came to me; memory of an incident I had almost completely forgotten.

On one of my expeditions into Guiana, I had camped near an outcrop of fine-grained granite, and casually examining it, had found a most curious condition. Although the exposed upper surface was flinty hard, a layer of the rock strata beneath was as soft as wet

clay, although indistinguishable from the rest of the rock in outward appearance. Interested in the phenomenon, I had searched about until I had found a crack leading from the softened, decomposed layer to the surface of the ledge covered with several feet of earth. A huge tree grew above the spot, and its roots, seeking a firmer hold, had penetrated the crevices of the rock, even extending into the soft, clay-like portion. It had not occurred to me that there was anything really remarkable about the incident. Water seeping down for countless ages had gradually caused decomposition, I decided. It hadn't even occurred to me to wonder why one portion and not another had been affected.

But now, that I stood there watching the men softening the surface of the diorite blocks sudden realization dawned upon me. Unquestionably, I decided in my mind, the granite strata in Guiana had been softened by the same means, by some unknown but powerful solvent produced by a combination of rain water, salts and acids in the earth, and the sap or juices of the tree roots, for—now that I recalled the matter—I remembered that the softened granite had occurred only where the roots of the tree had been present in the cracks.

I SIGHED as I realized how close I had been to making a discovery that would have astounded the world. But I had made it now. I turned to the foreman. "Tell me," I said, "is that within the tank the Winipacha you mentioned? How is it made, of what magic things is it composed?"

"There is no magic, my lord," he assured me. "Magic is ever the work of evil spirits, but the Winipacha is the gift of the gods. To make it we but brew the sap of the Kosca-Camayoc tree with the white rock from the Cave of the Bats and add thereto the waters

from the Spring of the Smoke, and being blessed by Surayacu it is ready to be used."

The Kosca-Camayoc tree—literally the "Stone-cutter!" I would make it my business to find and identify that. The white stone from the Cave of the Bats; probably fossilized guano rich in nitrates and phosphates. The waters from the Spring of the Smoke; unquestionably a hot mineral spring! How simple after all! But there were many other details of the process I wished cleared up. I plied the foreman with questions. Did the Winipacha injure the human skin or clothing? How was it action controlled. How long did the rock remain soft after its application? And a score of similar queries. Patiently, clearly he explained everything. The solution softened the rock to a depth of about half an inch at each application. As rapidly as the softened surface was cut away more of the solvent was applied to the hard interior, and more of the softened rock was cut and dug away, until the desired depth had been reached. Meanwhile, the portions in relief, being left untreated, had hardened somewhat. And by placing the finished stone in the sunshine it would become restored to its original state in a few weeks.

How ridiculously simple it was! No wonder the people had been able to carve that tremendous fortress from the solid mountain side. No wonder they had been able to cut and fit immense blocks of stone with such mathematical precision. Time was required of course, for the effect of the Winipach was superficial; but not so much time as might be imagined. The foreman showed me the quarry where his men were cutting masses of stone from the cliff-side, and I was amazed to find how very rapidly they worked, far more rapidly in fact than our own quarrymen with machine-driven tools. The form of a block was

marked out. The solvent was applied along the markings, and in a few moments a groove half an inch in depth had been dug out. By the time the workman had cut around to his starting place a helper had applied a second coat of the Winipach. As a result, the cutting was continuous, and the quarrymen's wooden tools bit into the surface of the cliff like steam-drills. Most of the stones were quarried in the particular form and size required, and needed only to be faced and smoothed in order to be ready for use. And as this was the simplest job of all, boys or apprentices were employed at the work.

It was a strange, an astounding sight to see them shaving or planing-down the irregular surfaces by means of wooden implements much like giant drawknives. And I smiled at the thought of how the world had marvelled at the smooth, even surfaces of the stones in the Cuzco walls, when in reality they were the work of unskilled labor—of mere boys.

I HAD indeed made an epochal discovery, for now that I had learned how the pre-Incans cut their stone, a thousand problems were solved. Beyond any question the stupendous stones of Tiahuanaco had been cut and carved by the same means. The gigantic blocks forming the Cuzco fortress of Sacsayuan, the endless walls and buildings, the gigantic images—all had been made by this easy, simple process. And no doubt, I mentally decided, as I left the stone cutters' yard, the youngsters of pre-Incan days had filched some of the Winipacha and had amused themselves by cutting ridiculous, meaningless figures and recesses in the cliffs and boulders, just as our boys of to-day find amusement by daubing paint on walls and fences. And I chuckled to think how we archaeologists had puzzled

our brains and had written countless monograms in our endeavor to explain what really had been but the idle pranks of pre-Incan youths!

CHAPTER X

The Monster of the Sacrifice

WITH all the ancient rites and reverence of the Chavins, our friend Red and Cherisona were married. Arrayed in gorgeous robes and ablaze with gold and jewels, the two had stood within the temple, and, before the great golden image of the sun above the high altar, they had taken the required vows, Red repeating the words of the high-priest. At his right had stood Saunderson, looking like the sun-god in the magnificent costume he had donned for the occasion, while I had been honored above all others by being selected by Sarayacu to act as his proxy and give the bride away.

Following the service, which was so simple and short that it seemed entirely out of proportion to the elaborate preparations and rites with which the wedding was surrounded, Red and his bride had been crowned King and Queen of Urkon.

With as much pomp and pageantry and ceremony as though they were to be the monarchs of a great empire, instead of rulers of a little valley with scarcely one thousand inhabitants, they had been placed upon their thrones as the successors of the line of Chavin kings who had claimed direct descent from the semi-divine Wira-Kocha.

Wearing garments woven of viscacha fur softer and finer than silk, and heavy with gold embroidery, with a collar of fifty-two immense emeralds, each carved to symbolize one of the moon's phases, laden with the jewel-encrusted insignia of royalty, and with the

quadruple golden crown of the Chavin emperors upon his flaming head, Red had repeated the oath which, after hours of tutelage, he had learned by heart. Holding in his hand the triple-headed sceptre with its golden figures of the condor, the jaguar and the serpent—symbols of power over earth, air and water—he had publicly declared Cherisona to be his queen. And seated on their thrones the two had received the homage of their happy subjects. Despite of his regal raiment, Red seemed a highly incongruous figure, as he sat on the great, lapis-lazuli throne, but Cherisona on her throne of rope-pink crystal was every inch a queen.

"By Jove, blood *will* tell!" exclaimed Saunderson in lowered tones. "Anyone would know she has royal blood in her veins. Really, old man, I don't know whether to be sorry for Red or to envy him. He's a deucedly lucky beggar to get Cherisona for a wife, but I fancy he'll not find being a king a real sinecure."

"I don't know," I replied. "Red's got a will of his own like most red-heads and he's not the kind to stand for any hen-pecking, even by a red-headed queen."

"Righto!" agreed Saunderson. "But how about the old parson? I don't fancy that self-satisfied smirk on his dried-apple face. Somehow I imagine the old beggar looks forward to being real king here, with Red little more than a figure-head."

I SMILED. "If he does he'll come a cropper," I declared. "He doesn't know Red."

Saunderson himself had taken a most important part in the coronation ceremonies. Several days before the coronation was scheduled to take place, Sarayacu had come to me and had explained that according to immemorial custom

certain high dignitaries must be present at the coronation. It was absolutely essential to have an Apuy-Ticuy or Prime Minister and a War-Lord or Minister of War at the very least. In my capacity as councillor and Amautu of the Red Haired One I could take the place of Apuy-Ticuy for the occasion, but there must be a War Lord. For many years, he went on to explain, there had been no real fighting force maintained, and hence no great captains or generals. But even if there were no enemies to fight, there must be a royal guard with an exalted officer in command. Would I ask the One of the Sun Hair to become the War Lord?"

Rather to my surprise Saunderson was quite pleased with the idea. "My word, yes, of course, by all means!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "By Jove, no end of a lark! Fancy me being a Minister of War! But seriously, old chap—" abandoning his flippant manner—"I think there are great advantages to be gained. I'm not expecting trouble, of course, but if any difficulties should arise, why the chap who has the army back of him will be top-dog, you know."

I laughed. "From what I've seen of the army that wouldn't amount to much," I told him.

"Right, distinctly right!" he agreed. "But don't imagine that if I become commander-in-chief, the army will remain in its *status-quo*, old top. Indeed no, not a bit of it. I'll have a ripping time organizing a force, drilling the beggars, making real soldiers out of them—takes me back to dear, old Aldershot, you know. And with you as Prime Minister—my word, why, we'll control the whole bally place.

As a result of all this, Saunderson and I were participants, instead of mere onlookers, at the coronation ceremonies.

Arrayed in the full regalia of the

War-Lord of the Chavins, wearing a tunic of blue and white with an elaborate, plumed helmet of gold, with a golden breastplate covering his chest, and carrying a mosaic-studded shield of burnished bronze and a great silver-headed battle-axe, Saunderson presented a truly heroic-looking figure, his blonde hair and beard making him appear more like some Viking king than like a warrior-chief of Andean Indians. To his left, back of the thrones, was the royal guard; a dozen stalwart, deep-chested fellows in blue uniforms, with polished bronze shields, caps and weapons, who had been put through such a course of intensive training by their new commander, that they regarded him as a hero-god rather than as a mortal man.

My own part was not so conspicuous. True, I was most richly dressed in the garments which tradition and custom had decreed as the ceremonial costume of the Apuy Ticuy. And I was rather surprised to find that the predominating colors were red and black—the colors of the priesthood and religious branch of the government; although the blue and white of the royal household appeared in my plume and head band. Obviously the Prime Minister was allied to both church and state—a sort of intermediary as it were—and I realized what a far-sighted and crafty fellow was Sarayacu in securing my services as a go-between for himself and the new king.

OF course it was a gala day for everyone. No work was done. A great feast had been spread just outside the palace grounds, there was dancing, singing, feats of strength and skill, and of course unlimited quantities of chicha to be imbibed. The celebration lasted all day and well into the night, and both Saunderson and myself were bored and weary when at last we retired. As

for Red—well, he was as pleased and happy and found everything as entertaining and delightful as should be expected of a man who had acquired a crown and a queen the same day.

Saunderson, with the nucleus of his army, was as happy as a child with a new toy. Red was fully occupied with affairs of state and his newly wedded bliss, and between acting as interpreter, advising Red on problems that confronted him, teaching him the language, and my own studies, I had no time to spare.

Any doubts which might have lingered in our minds as to the sincerity of the priest had been swept away. He treated us with the utmost respect and esteem and his attitude towards his new king was one of real veneration.

So the days and weeks slipped by. Then one day Red—for we never thought or spoke of him as "The King" or as "Huata Pilchu"—sent for me. There was a worried, troubled expression on his face, and I knew he was facing some problem which he could not solve.

"What's up now, Red?" I asked him. "No domestic troubles so soon, I hope."

"Naw," he said. "Me an' Cherisona, we're gettin' on fine. Just like a couple of goofy love-birds. Naw, it's somethin' else. I been learnin' to talk an' savvy her lingo pretty good, 'tween her an' you teachin' me, but now an' again she says somethin' that I don't get the meanin' of. This mornin' she says to me: 'Soon will come the time of sorrowin' an' sadness to my people. Soon will come the day of sacrifice.' An' when I asked what did she mean she said somethin' about the 'thing of evil' an' virgins, an' what she called the 'Amaruey,' near as I could get it. An' all of a sudden I remembered about how the padre told you somethin' about sacrificin' girls to some devil or other, an'

that bein' the same word you said meant a dragon. Hell, Doc, what's it all mean anyhow? All this damned talk of dragons an' evil an' sacrificin' girls, an' all?"

"I don't know, but I intend to find out," I told him. "Is Cherisona here?"

"Naw, she's went up to the temple to pray," he replied. "I never did see folks that are so all-fired given to prayin'. Seems like they pray for most everything there is. Funny thing, too—" he added, "seein' they's only one padre here."

"I'll go up there and talk with her," I said. "And I'll have a talk with Sa-rayacu at the same time. I'm afraid, Red, there's some sinister mystery here, but I'll know the truth mighty soon, never fear."

AS I crossed the plaza on my way to the temple, Saunderson came hurrying toward me. He was greatly excited—for Saunderson—and his first words told me that something most unusual must have occurred.

"Oh, but I say!" he exclaimed. "I was just going to hunt you up, old chap. My whole bally army has mutinied!"

"Mutinied!" I cried. "You mean they've revolted?"

"No, no, my dear man, nothing like that—yet!" he assured me. "But they've refused to obey orders, absolutely. Took them for a hike and a practice drill over at the old fortress—jolly fine place for drilling the beggars—nothing to distract their minds, and military atmosphere and all that sort of thing. Then I started to lead them down a little trail I spotted that appeared to lead into the ravine beyond, but the rascals refused, positively. I argued with them, commanded them, threatened them. Yes, by Jove, I even swore at them, but they wouldn't budge an inch along that trail. And do you know what the beggars said? Told me

the most extraordinary tale. Said it led to the home of the 'evil one,' the "Amaru Huay". My sainted aunt! that recalled to my jolly old nut what Sarayacu told you the day we arrived, and what you said about there being a mystery. All rot, of course! Just plain funk on the part of those superstitious beggars of mine. Laughed at them, of course, and to restore their morale I started to go down alone. My word, they actually chattered with fear! Fell on their faces and begged me not to do so. Deucedly contagious—their panicky fear, you know, and as I didn't have a weapon other than my battle-axe I decided discretion to be the better part of valor and refrained. But they told me a most extraordinary tale, actually! Said this Amaruey beast, or whatever it is, appears at regular intervals—something to do with the moon and stars, they believe—and that the only way it can be appeased is by sacrificing three lovely virgins to it. Deucedly like the old Greek myths, don't you think, or Grimu's fairy tales, or such silly nonsense. Not one of the beggars had ever seen the thing, so I decided to come back here, find you, secure my rifle and go back and play St. George. Thought maybe you'd wish to be present—if there is any beast there. Queer yarn, don't you think?"

"Decidedly," I replied, "but not so queer as the coincidence of meeting you and hearing your story. Not ten minutes ago Red sent for me and told me Cherisona had mentioned something about the time of sadness being near and had spoken of the sacrifice and the Amaruey; and I was on my way to the temple to question her and Sarayacu in regard to the matter when we met."

"Pon my word, that is strange, extraordinary, really!" he exclaimed. "Possibly not so remarkable as it may appear—at first thought," I said. "If periodical sacrifices are held—whatever the

Amaruey may be, and if it is near the time for them, it would not be such a surprising coincidence. But regardless of that, I'm going to learn the truth of the matter. I'm going to question the priest."

"Righto!" agreed Saunderson. "I'll toddle along and get my guns and rout out Karen and meet you here in fifteen minutes. You hunt up the parson and fetch him along to witness the slaying of the Minotaur."

Sarayacu, however, could not be found, and Cherisona was not in the temple. After all, I decided, it didn't really matter. Whatever the mysterious 'evil one' might prove to be—whether real or imaginary, Saunderson and I could solve the mystery by ourselves. So, abandoning my search for the priest, I retraced my way to the plaza, and a moment later was joined by Saunderson and Karen.

"DID you tell Red where we were going?" I asked as we took the road leading to the old fortress.

"Didn't see him," Saunderson replied. Then, with a chuckle, "Fact is, I endeavored to avoid doing so," he confessed. "If the King came along the entire population would follow. I'm going on a hunt, you know—really big game, I hope—and I don't fancy a safari of spectators."

"Perhaps it's just as well," I agreed. "But I'm rather afraid you'll be disappointed in your search for game. In my opinion the dreaded monster is wholly imaginary—a demoniacal spirit supposed to dwell in the ravine."

Without attracting any particular notice, we reached the deserted fortress, and crossing the immense, level summit, Saunderson led the way to the hidden trail he had discovered. It was scarcely more than a crevice in the rock, and with Saunderson, carrying his heavy express

rifle, in the lead, and with Karen bringing up the rear, we proceeded carefully and silently along the narrow pathway under the overhanging cliff. The way descended at quite a steep grade for several hundred feet. Then, turning abruptly, it debouched upon a platform cut in the rock and protected by a low parapet except in one spot where a narrow opening had been left. Stepping forward, expecting to find a stairway leading downward, Saunderson leaped back with a sharp cry. "Look out!" he warned me as I approached. "It's an absolute death-trap!" I peered over and shuddered. From the narrow opening in the parapet a stone gutter or chute led downward at an acute angle, like a toboggan slide, to the bottom of the dark ravine fully two hundred feet below. But I scarcely noticed this, for my eyes were focussed upon innumerable white objects scattered over the floor of the chasm. Saunderson gripped my arm as he saw them. "My God!" he exclaimed. "They're skeletons and skulls—human skulls!"

"All that remain of the sacrificed virgins," I said. "I'm afraid I'll have to take back what I said about the monster being immaterial. I——"

"Good Lord, what a terrible death—to be shot down that slide to the beast!" cried Saunderson. "What do you——"

Suddenly he stiffened. "Look! Do you see anything—there in that cave?" he exclaimed, his voice husky with excitement.

I peered steadfastly at the yawning black hole in one of the cliffs. For an instant I could distinguish nothing. Then—I held my breath, there was something—something moving, moving slowly, deliberately, within the entrance of the great cavern. And then—my heart seemed to cease beating, cold chills ran up and down my spine—out from the eerie black hole there slowly emerged a

great misshapen head, such a head as one sees in a nightmare or the delirium of a fever. A head indescribably horrible. A head scaly, with three great, crooked horns, with drooling, slathering jaws, with gleaming foot-long, dagger-like teeth. A head which living, moving, weaving slowly from side to side, gave the impression of immeasurable age, of belonging to some other world, to another planet. For a brief moment it remained there, as if watching, sniffing the air, striving to locate our presence. I felt as if in an hypnotic spell. The thing was too impossible, too incredible. And then the roar of Saunderson's rifle thundered in my ears. I distinctly saw the tiny blurr as the bullet struck the monstrous thing. I could almost have sworn I heard it hit. But except for a slight twitch—such a twitch as a horse might give to rid itself of a troublesome fly—the fearsome thing gave no indication of feeling the bullet. Again and again Saunderson fired. The ravine reverberated to the echoes of the explosions. Some bullets went wild—I saw slivers of rock fly as they struck—but more went true. But the steel-jacketed missiles that would bring down an elephant or a charging rhino made no impression upon that awful, horrifying head. Not until the last echo of the gunshots had died away did it move. Then slowly, deliberately, it withdrew and vanished in the black recesses of its lair.

SAUNDERSON leaned back against the rock wall, wiping his forehead. His face actually white.

"God in heaven, is such a monster possible?" he muttered.

"Ten minutes ago I should have said 'no,'" I told him taking a deep breath. "Now, I must say 'yes.' It's real; it actually exists. It's a left-over from some past age, a surviving saurian of some sort."

He gave a short, dry, harsh laugh. "No wonder they call it a dragon!" he exclaimed. "My sainted aunt! St. George would have thrown a fit if he'd seen that—that monstrosity. By Jove, I can't believe it! Can't believe my bullets didn't even tickle the thing! Why, damme, it would require artillery to destroy that nightmare! And—" he shuddered—"to think of human beings— young girls, being dropped down that chute to the monster! God, Doctor, it's too beastly horrible to contemplate!"

"Possibly they are mercifully killed first," I suggested, "But it *must* stop. Neither you, nor Red, nor I, will stand for any such unspeakable crimes. Sarayacu expects Red to kill the monster—he said so when he made his speech when we arrived. But even if it cannot be destroyed there'll be no more sacrifices. To put a stop to them may mean trouble. If the people, if Sarayacu, believe their dragon possesses supernatural powers—as they probably do—and must be appeased by sacrifices—there's no telling what trouble we may have. It all depends upon the amount of faith they have in us—in Red. He's their King. They may be willing to obey him in everything. On the other hand, they may feel that he's fallen down on his job, if he can't destroy the monster. I'm afraid, Saunderson, we're in for more than we bargained for."

He grinned. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "Really, you know, I haven't felt so pepped up, as you Americans say, since the jolly old war. Feel just as I did when we were planning to make a raid on the Huns' trenches. 'Pon my word, I may have occasion to use my soldiers yet! But, I say, let's toddle along and tell old Red what we've seen and map out our campaign."

"I think I understand why that other valley and the fortress were deserted," I said as we left the place.

"Because of that monster's presence, eh?"

"Exactly," I told him. "There may have been several—perhaps numbers— of the terrible creatures, thirty or forty centuries ago. The one we saw is probably the sole survivor. He may be hundreds, thousands of years old. Don't forget that it's a reptile, and reptiles are the longest-lived of all creatures. If turtles, snakes, crocodiles live to be several hundred years of age, a saurian might well live to be several thousand years old."

"Right, I can credit that," said Saunderson. "By Jove, the damnable thing looked to be a million. But how has he survived? There's no food in that little ravine, you know."

"You forget the virgins," I reminded him.

"Ye gods! You mean he's actually kept alive by feeding him girls?" cried Saunderson.

"So I believe," I assured him. "There were hundreds—many hundreds, of skeletons down in that hell-hole. We don't know, yet, how often these sacrifices take place. But if three girls are fed to the monster each time, and the sacrifices are fairly frequent, it might serve to keep him alive. After a full meal he probably sleeps for a long period, as do other carnivorous reptiles. Moreover, how do we know that there are not llamas, alpacas and goats fed to the creature?"

"By the Almighty, I'd like to shove that crafty old priest down that slide!" declared Saunderson savagely. "He's the scoundrel who is responsible for the atrocities, you know."

RED listened with amazement to our story. He was a man of action, a staunch believer in the efficacy of "getting the drop on the other man," and I had great difficulty in controlling his in-

clination to "make things hot" for his grandfather-in-law.

"Hell fire an' damnation!" he exploded. "Think I'm a-goin' to stan' for them kids bein' fed to that devil? I ain't! I'm king, ain't I? You bet your boots I am, an' what I say's goin' to go if I have to shoot daylight's outen the padre and half the town. Holy smoke! who'd ever guess such nice, pleasant-spoken, decent-seemin' folks could be such hell-fiends? But I reckon Injuns is all the same—just scratch their hides an' you'll find a devil!

"Let's get the old padre down here an' tell him where he gets off and that them damned sacrifices is done with an' over, once an' forever," said Red. "Let me do the talking," I said as we awaited Sarayacu's arrival. "Let me first hear what he has to say. Then we can state our ultimatum."

The others agreed to this, and when the priest appeared and asked in what way he might serve us, I went directly to the point. Without any preamble I told him what we had seen, and asked why sacrifices were made to the monstrous reptile in the ravine. "Why," I demanded, "was the 'evil one' not left to starve and die?"

There is no necessity of repeating the priest's words *verbatim*. He declared that failure to propitiate the monster would result in the most dire calamity. So it had been prophesied, so said ages-old tradition. Ages ago, he informed me, the people who had dwelt in the great valley had failed to make sacrifices to the Amaruquay, and from nowhere had come the "little men" and the earth had opened and had spewed forth other Amaruquays, and all in the valley, save a few who sought refuge in the fortress, had perished. But, he added, the prophecy of old had foretold that with the coming of Huata Pilcu, the Red Haired One, who was to be the

King, the Amaruquay would be destroyed. All in the valley would rejoice if this came to pass—as it must—but until the 'evil one' had been slain the sacrifices must be made. And—he announced—the time for the next sacrifice drew near. Within three days the Amaruquay must be destroyed or three lovely virgins must be delivered to the monster.

CHAPTER XI

In the Den of the Dinosaur

"RED, my lad, it's distinctly 'up to you' to become a second St. George!" exclaimed Saunderson when Sarayacu delivered his ultimatum. "Gird up your loins, old top, strap on your six-guns, don your coat of mail and take my advice and send for a dynamite bomb or a six-inch gun before you enter the dragon's lair."

Red ignored the other's words completely. Forgetting all caution, disregarding my warnings, and heedless of the priest's position in the community, he leaped to his feet and advanced threatening towards the old man. Then, in a torrent of words, he gave free rein to his ideas and feelings. His command of the language was limited, but he made up for lack of fluency by emphasis, and filled in missing words with oaths, curses and border English of which he was a past-master.

An expression of surprise swept over the wrinkled face of the priest, but he was not one to be cowed or browbeaten, even by Red. He drew himself up with dignity. "My lord is my king," he said calmly. "In all matters of state my lord's word is law unto his people and unto me. But though my lord is king he knows nothing of the duties of a priest of Urkon. Even the King cannot interfere with the priest-clan or the sacred matters. Joyful, indeed, would I be

were the Amaruhuay destroyed. Great would be the rejoicing of the people. But until the thing of evil is destroyed the sacrifice of the virgins must be made. I Sarayacu, priest of Urkon, have spoken."

With an obeisance to Red the priest turned and left the room.

"What do you know about that?" exclaimed Red who was too surprised to do more than stare at the retreating figure of Sarayacu.

"Precisely what I knew before you delivered your Dutch Uncle address, Red, my lad," grinned Saunderson.

"Well, what the blazes are we gonna do then?" he demanded. "I swear I ain't goin' to stand for no sacrifice, an' that old piece of crowbait swears he's goin' ahead with it."

"Heads he wins, tails you lose!" exclaimed Saunderson. "But really, now, you know, all frivolity aside, we *do* appear to have reached a deadlock as one might say. By Jove, yes, an actual *impasse*. 'Pon my word, it's a jolly fine example of what my old master in physics at dear old Oxford referred to as an irresistible force meeting an immovable object, and all that sort of thing! Now let's put our jolly old heads together and see can we hatch out some scheme to checkmate our sacerdotal opponent. Three heads should be better than one, really you know."

"**M**E, I'll chuck this king job if he doesn't do like I say," Red declared. "That wouldn't save the victims of the sacrifice," I told him. "Moreover, you can't 'chuck' the job as you say. You have been crowned king, and king you'll be, as long as you live or until some aspirant to the throne deposes you. And if you repudiated the sacred vows you made you would doubtless be most unpleasantly disposed of as a traitor. And don't forget that Cherisona

will share your fate. No, as far as I can see, there are only two courses we can follow. One is to appeal to the people, try to win the public over to our side, induce them to rebel against the priest's decision. The other is to try to postpone the day of sacrifice by promises to destroy the monster. Then, if nothing dire occurs, the people and the priest may lose faith in their ridiculous fears."

"Right, absolutely right, in-so-far as it goes," said Saunderson. "But one can't carry out a campaign of speechmaking and enlightenment in three days, you know. And I fear the eminent ecclesiastic would propound a somewhat embarrassing question were we to suggest a delay in order to permit us to do away with the Minotaur. Why, he might well ask, do we not destroy the beast at once and put an end to the matter?"

"Well, why in hell don't we?" demanded Red. "I ain't never seen no critter yet what couldn't be killed."

"Ah, but you haven't seen *this* critter," my lad! the other reminded him. "Far be it from me to declare the creature immortal. 'Artillery, gas bombs, aerial torpedoes, even a few pounds of dynamite or a liberal dose of cyanide would doubtless cause its demise. But without such lethal weapons and means, where are we? as one might say."

"What's the matter with kidnappin' the parson?" demanded Red. "All we gotta do is to get him down here again, grab hold of him an' lock him up till the time for the sacrificin' is past or till he signs on the dotted line. We needn't hurt him none."

I shook my head. "That would never do," I asserted. "In the first place he would be instantly missed. In the second place we couldn't keep his whereabouts a secret. In the third place we would have to release him eventually, and when we did—Well, personally, I

would prefer to take my chances with the dinosaur, I think."

"We ain't gettin' nowhere," growled Red. "Ain't there no way we can stop them girls bein' fed to that critter, short of killin' him?"

"Oh yes, yes indeed!" grinned Saunderson. "We might kill the girls, you know."

"Damned sight better did we kill that old coyote of a priest," snarled Red. "Mebbe he's Cherisona's granddaddy, but I reckon she'd get over mournin' of him after a time. An' he wouldn't be no loss to the world. 'Pears to me that's the easiest way to settle it. 'Sposin' it does stir up a hornets' nest for a spell? We got guns, an' these Injuns are scairt stiff of 'em. Soon's ever we started shootin' they'd cut an' run, an' the whole show'd be over."

"Possibly, but hardly probably," I declared. "Even with our superior weapons we five could scarcely control more than a thousand Indians, especially when animated by religious fervor, determined to avenge the murder of their priest. They easily could starve us out here."

"By Jove, I have an idea!" exclaimed Saunderson. "Suppose we block up the trail leading to the place of sacrifice! Then they jolly well couldn't reach it within the proper time, and the whole bally show would be off!"

"That's the most sensible suggestion we've had yet," I admitted. "But the barricade would be discovered and removed in time for the ceremony, I am certain."

Saunderson sighed. "It would appear that all suggestions are futile," he said. "The public and the priest hold all the cards, as one might say. 'Pon my word, I fear me the virgins will have to go the way of their many predecessors." Then—with sudden animation—"By Jove, imagine what my knightly ancestors would have done under like cir-

cumstances! The trouble is, my lads, we've been thinking too bally much about our own skins. We've been weighing and measuring our own chances regardless of the fate of the ladies in the case. When I led my squad across No Man's Land did I say to myself, 'Sandy, old top, you're running a bally risk, the Huns may get you.' My word, no, not a bit of it! All we considered was our objective. I say, old things, let's focus our jolly old minds on our objective and let the rest rip, what say?"

"By glory, I didn't never think you could talk that much horse-sense!" cried Red. "Me, I'm with you, Mister. Let's shake on it!"

"I'M willing to stand by you, regardless of what may follow," I told them, gripping their hands in turn. "But," I added, "don't forget that there is a vast difference between your raids on a German machine-gun nest and the present affair. In the one case, carefully laid plans had been made, in the other we will be compelled to act on the spur of the moment, to let events shape themselves."

"Righto!" agreed Saunderson. "Still and all, my jolly old nut is really commencing to function properly. 'Pon my word, I actually *am* beginning to see light. There are two ways we can go about it. Rescue the maidens from the priest and defy him and the mob in the citadel, where there are ample means for withstanding a siege, or take possession of the place of sacrifice and, like Horatius, hold the bridge, as one might say—rescue the victims at the very brink of the abyss, and all that sort of thing, you know."

I clapped him on the back. "Either scheme might succeed," I exclaimed. "Sometimes the most desperate deeds are the safest."

Red grinned. "Sounds like old times on the border," he remarked. "Looks like it might come to shootin' it out. An' if it comes to handlin' a six-gun I reckon old Red'll be right there to deliver the goods. Yep, me, I always aimed for to die with my boots on and—" he glanced ruefully at his feet—"I reckon these sandals'll do just as well. Not that I'm cravin' to kick off," he added hastily—"I got a wife for to look after, an' I ain't pinin' to leave her a lone widder."

For the next half hour we discussed ways and means, made and abandoned innumerable plans, and at last decided to leave all to chance and to circumstances as they arose to confront us. Afterwards it occurred to me that it was rather remarkable that we should have been so deeply and vitally concerned with the matter. Why we should have been obsessed with the determination to prevent the time-honored, traditional custom of an alien race is something of a mystery. If the people wished to sacrifice three of their young girls to the monster in the ravine, why should we three white men have interfered? I admit I cannot say. Possibly it was that spark of chivalry that ever burns in the Anglo-Saxon breast. Possibly it was merely the abhorrence that civilized man holds for human sacrifices and cruelty. But I prefer to think that it was the hand of Destiny, that Fate or Providence guided us and filled us with the determination to save the prospective victims regardless of all hazards and imminent risks of losing our own lives.

Our plans were of necessity somewhat indefinite and subject to a change at any moment. But we endeavored to prepare for any eventuality that we could foresee. For this reason we made a careful examination of the citadel wherein, if worst came to worst, we might be forced to take refuge.

"I'm rather inclined to feel I can depend upon the loyalty of my troops," Saunderson announced on the day after our decision had been made. "I've sounded them a bit, you know, and most of them appear to be strongly anti-sacrificial. Several of the beggars have had members of their families fed to the monster in the past, and my sergeant lost his daughter a few months ago. I'm quite positive that if it came to hostilities they would stand by us."

"Fine!" I told him. "Probably many others would swing to our side if it came to an issue. I've been thinking over matters, and I've come to the conclusion that we will have far greater chances of success if we act at the last moment. If we are too precipitate we may fail entirely. We may either be forced to retire to the citadel, where we will be helpless to do anything, or, if we save the girls, others may be substituted for them. On the other hand—"

SAM'S appearance on the scene interrupted me. "Boggin' yo' pardon, Chief, Ah come to repo't a matter what Ah feel yo' desiah to know, sir," he said. "Ah been 'quirin' the manner of talkin' wif tha people, yo' know, Chief, an' Ah can hear wha' they says more better than Ah can talk wif he. An' Ah hear how tha priest aim fo' mek sac'ifice to-morrer, an' how he been take tha girls a'ready, an' they up to tha temple. An' Ah knows yo'all plottin' an' complotin' to save 'em, so Ah think bes' to a'quain' you wif tha fac's of tha case, Chief."

"Come on!" cried Red. "Let's go on up an' get 'em."

I shook my head. "To attempt that would be suicidal," I told him. "We can't force our way into the temple. To do so would be desecration, and every man and woman would turn against us. As long as those girls are within the

sacred precincts of the temple they are safe, and we are powerless. When or how they will be taken from there to the place of sacrifice we don't know. But we can keep a constant vigil and be ready to act at a moment's notice. They may be conducted under a strong guard, they may be accompanied by a procession of hundreds of people or they may be led secretly and alone to the ravine."

"I say!" ejaculated Saunderson. "I've been thinking over what you said a few moments ago—about waiting until the last moment, you know. I do believe you're right, distinctly right. If we can appear on the scene at the psychological moment and wrest the fair maidens from the very brink of the grave as it were, it will be a jolly sight more dramatic. And we'll have the old dominie and his minions at a decided disadvantage over there, also, don't you think?"

"Exactly," I agreed. "I suggest that you divide your men. Place a strong guard here at the citadel in case we are forced to fall back on it, and have the others mobilized and ready. We can't use them at the scene of action. The trail is barely wide enough for two men to pass abreast, and we don't want our line of retreat blocked. But if they are near at hand—concealed somewhere about the old fortress—they will be very useful when we fall back, whether we are successful or fail."

"My eye!" exclaimed Saunderson. "Why, my dear chap, as an archaeologist you're a military strategist, absolutely yes! But you're right, distinctly right. I can quite see your point. I'll select some picked men—who have personal feelings in the matter—for our reserves."

There was now nothing more we could do but to wait and watch for the appearance of the doomed girls and

the priest. We took turns at this, with one of us always on duty during every hour of the day and night, but it was not until just before dawn that our vigil was rewarded. Then, from the temple gates, a little procession appeared wending its way silently through the semi-darkness. Securely hidden in the dark shadows of the citadel we watched it pass. First came the six stalwart temple guards. Then, borne on golden litters, the three virgins, bound and gagged and swathed in robes of purple. And, bringing up the rear, Sarayacu, hobbling along, the tapping of his staff the only sound that broke the silence of the hour that precedes the dawn.

A MOMENT later we crept from our hiding places and followed silently after, while, a hundred paces in our rear, the grim, armed warriors marched noiselessly towards the ancient fortress. Fortunately a pall of gray mist hung low across the valley and visibility was limited to a scant fifty yards. In fact we could see no sign of those we were trailing and were guided solely by the sound of the priest's staff, ceaselessly tapping upon the stones of the road. Never had I felt so keyed up, so filled with suppressed excitement. For the first time I realized fully the meaning of that term "zero hour." So, I mused, must the men have felt when creeping from their trenches on some desperate sortie across the shell torn battlefields of France. Yet we were in no danger. Even had our presence been suspected, had it come to hostilities, the odds would have been in our favor. I don't think the element of fear entered into my sensations in the least. Rather, it was the silence, the mysterious gray world in which we moved, the regular eerie tapping of the priest's cane, and the nervous tension.

It seemed hours, ages, until we reached the ancient fortress. Dawn was breaking, a faint pink flush showed above the mountains to the east, and the mists were lifting. Crouching out of sight we watched those we were following, as, like spectral wraiths rather than beings of flesh and blood, they moved across the summit of the fortress and vanished in the deep shadows of the trail.

The time had come for swift and decisive action. Saunderson gave a few sharp, curt commands to his men, and together we hurried towards the pathway that led to the place of sacrifice.

"Remember," I warned the others in a whisper. "No violence unless it becomes absolutely necessary. We are here to save lives, not to take them. If resistance is offered shoot over their heads. If the guards attempt to use their weapons wing them if necessary; but don't shoot to kill except as a last resort."

The next moment we were in the black shadows of the cliffs, picking our way along the narrow trail, revolvers in hand. Suddenly, Saunderson, who was in the lead halted. "Listen!" he whispered.

From ahead came the sound of singing, the cadence of a chant.

"Hurry!" I exclaimed in lowered tones. "The ceremony has begun. We've no time to lose!"

Almost recklessly we dashed forward. The next moment we were at the end of the trail. Beyond the ravine the mountain tops glowed with red and gold where touched by the rays of the rising sun, but at our feet the chasm yawned black and forbidding with the monstrous beast lurking in its depths. Halting within the shadows of the narrow trail we peered cautiously from the shelter of the rocks. Upon the narrow platform of stone stood the actors in the tragic

drama we were about to interrupt.

Against the wall of cliff stood the guards, grim, silent, motionless, their accoutrements and weapons of polished bronze gleaming dully in the half light. Before them rested the three litters with their helpless human burdens. Still bound and gagged, the victims of the sacrifice had been stripped of their coverings, and lay like statues awaiting the moment when they would be hurled to a terrible death. And standing by the narrow opening in the parapet was Sarayacu, with hands upraised and face uplifted, a strangely exalted expression on his features, as he intoned the ancient chant to the rising sun.

I felt Red's muscles tighten. I heard a long, indrawn breath that was almost a groan from Saunderson.

"HOLD hard!" I whispered. "He's waiting for the sun. The moment the light falls upon him—go!"

Slowly the light increased. Lower and lower the golden glow crept down the mountain sides beyond. Little by little the black shadows of the ravine were dissipated. Tense, with pounding hearts, we waited, as the monotonous crooning voice of the priest alone broke the vast silence. Then suddenly, as if conjured by his words, his white head glowed with a halo of light. In a *crescendo* that was almost a scream the chant ended and the priest sprang towards the nearest litter. With a quick motion he seized the recumbent form, and at that instant we rushed from our hiding place.

In a dozen strides Saunderson was beside the priest. Taken completely by surprise, momentarily terrified by our sudden apparition, the guards cowered back, and as Red covered them with his six-guns and they gazed into the muzzles of the dreaded weapons, spears and axes fell clattering from the nerveless hands

of the soldiers. But Sarayacu, surprised and amazed as he must have been, was no coward, nor did he intend to be prevented from fulfilling what he deemed a sacred duty. As Saunderson sprang toward him he lifted the girl bodily, and as if suddenly possessed of superhuman strength, he raised her above his head to hurl her down the chute. Saunderson's fist shot out, and dazed by the blow Sarayacu staggered back. As Saunderson caught the limp body of the girl the priest reeled, and with a blood-curdling scream plunged headlong down the slide!

Forgetting all else, we sprang to the parapet and gazed into the abyss. Far down the gutter-like chute Sarayacu was speeding to the awful death he had planned for the sacrificial virgins. The next instant he dropped from the slide and lay, a huddled, inert bundle upon the faintly-lit bottom of the ravine.

Awed, horrified at this unexpected tragedy, we stood gazing speechless, helpless, at the motionless form below. And then a shudder ran through us as from the black opening of the cavern that awesome, monstrous head appeared.

"My God!" gasped Red. Before we realized his intention he snatched up Saunderson's rifle and flung himself into the chute. Feet first, flat on his back, with hands grasping the rifle above his head, he shot downward.

Had he gone suddenly mad? Why had he made such a hare-brained self-sacrifice? He would be injured, stunned, probably killed outright, to lie helpless, until devoured before our eyes! But, as forgetting all enmities, the guards and ourselves watched fascinated, Red's speed suddenly slackened. Holding the rifle crosswise of the slide he was using it as a brake to check his swift descent. Slower and slower he moved, until within a hands-breadth of the bottom he came to a full stop. Leaping lightly to

the ground, he stood for a brief moment staring at the gigantic dinosaur lumbering towards him. Words cannot describe nor imagination picture how transcendently terrifying the monster must have appeared to him. Even to us, two hundred feet above, and safely far beyond its reach, the immense repulsive, ferocious thing thrilled us with fear and horror. But to Red, standing there alone, alone save for the unconscious form of the priest and the grisly skeletons with no means of escape, with the awful man-eating beast within a few rods of where he stood, the monster was enough to have driven a man raving mad with terror.

WE held our breaths. Utterly unconscious of her presence Saunderson still clasped the bound girl in his arms, as oblivious of all else we stared with bulging eyes at our comrade beneath us. The monstrous beast was waddling near and nearer to its victim. Was it capable of suddenly accelerating its pace? Could it leap or spring? I wondered dimly. If so, there was no hope for Red. It seemed minutes that he had been standing there, yet it could have been but a few seconds. Stooping quickly, he lifted the body of the priest, carried it to the partial protection of the recess beneath the end of the slide, and ran nimbly to one side. The monster was barely fifty feet from him. The gigantic jaws dripped with saliva, the huge snake-like tongue darted in and out. Slowly, like a serpent preparing to strike, the neck was upraised, the immense head swayed from side to side. Two spurts of flame, two puffs of smoke sprang from Red's guns, and the ravine echoed to the heavy detonations. With a hiss like the steam escaping from a locomotive, the great beast reared upon its hind legs. With its enormous clawed forefeet it pawed

at its throat where streaks of crimson stained the livid white skin.

"By the Lord, he got him!" shouted Saunderson, breaking the tense silence.

But the wounds merely served to infuriate the gigantic reptile. With incredible speed it wheeled and its head darted with wide opened jaws at its puny foe. Red sprang aside, dodging the viciously-snapping fangs, and as he leaped, his revolvers roared out again. He couldn't have been six feet from that nightmarish head when he fired, and Red was the most remarkable revolver shot I have ever seen. Small as it was, the dinosaur's eye was a good sized mark compared to the pip on a playing card, and I have seen Red shoot one pip after another from a ten of spades at twenty paces. As the soft-nosed bullets crashed through eye and skull, the gigantic beast seemed heaved upward as if by an earthquake. Convulsively it twisted, turned, writhed. Its stupendous tail with its crest of immense upright scales thrashed the rocks and threw showers of stones and sand twenty feet in the air. The titanic jaws opened and closed, biting at the air, at the surrounding rocks, at the dying creature's own body and legs, and the roar of Red's 'six-guns,' the crashing of the snapping jaws, the thrashing of the armored tail against the stones came to us in a confused bedlam of sound. Then slowly the terrible head sank to the earth, the tail gave a final convulsive twitch, and the monster lay motionless, dead!

Red glanced up, waved his hand and stepping forward sprang onto the dinosaur's head. And at that moment a shaft of sunlight flashed downward through a rift in the mountain side, and striking Red's hair transformed it to an aureole of flame.

A mighty sigh arose from the throats of the watching guards. Dropping to

their knees, they knocked their foreheads against the stone. No longer was Red merely their king. He was a god, a divinity. The prophecy had been fulfilled. Huata Pilcu, the Red-haired One, had destroyed the 'Evil One,' the Amaruhuay! The sacrifice of the virgins was forever at an end.

CHAPTER XII

The Mummy of the Room of Gold

FOR the first time Saunderson appeared to be aware of the girl in his arms.

"My sainted aunt!" he exclaimed, his face scarlet. "I say, this won't do, you know!"

Snatching up one of the discarded robes, he wrapped it about the girl, and placing her tenderly on her litter, quickly removed the gag from her mouth and freed her from her bonds. In the meantime the guards had freed and clothed the other two maidens. At the time I scarcely noticed this, for my thoughts were on how we were to get Red and the body of the priest out of the ravine. There seemed no other way than to send to the valley for a rope, and I was on the point of telling Sam to hurry back and bring a line when he solved the problem for me.

"Beggin' yo' pardon, Chief," he said, "takin' tha fac's of this case in consid'ation Ah sugges' we ties tha slings of tha soldiers en' to en' an' hauls Mister Red out. 'Pears to me min' they be plenty long 'nough fo' to reach he."

"You're a genius!" I told him. "Run to the men, get all their slings and get back as fast as you can."

I shouted down to Red. "Just a minute or two, an we'll lower a rope for you."

He waved his hand, spat, and calmly seated himself upon the carcass of the slain dinosaur.

I turned to speak to Saunderson, and gasped. He was still holding the rescued girl in his arms, but in quite a different manner. In fact it would have been difficult to have said whether he was holding her or she him, for her arms were about his neck, her head was nestled on his shoulder, and from the motions of his lips I felt safe in assuming that he was whispering words other than of comfort and reassurance into her ears. He glanced up and saw me staring at him. He blushed furiously, but I noticed he did not relax his arms about the young woman's waist.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed. "Don't be a peeping Tom, old chap. Really, you know, it's quite all right. Fact of the matter is I've fallen head over heels in love. By Jove, yes, actually! Congratulate me, old man—that's a good chap!"

I grinned. "You *will* play the knight-errant," I said. "Well, I suppose you're merely following out the traditions of your ancestors. I believe it was customary for knights who rescued damsels fair to marry them and live happily ever after. But just now, if you don't mind and the young lady can spare you, I should like your help for a few minutes. We must get Red and Sarayacu out of the pit."

When Sam returned with the slings, and we quickly knotted the strong alpaca-hair cords together, we had a line amply long enough to reach the bottom of the chute. Weighting the end with a stone we dropped it down. A moment later we were hauling Sarayacu upward. The priest had regained consciousness and was not badly injured, a fracture of one arm and a broken rib or two being the extent of his casualties. Again we lowered the rope, and a few moments later Red was once more with us and we gathered about, congratulating him, praising him, complimenting him for his heroic and magnificent feat.

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "'Twasn't nothin'. Didn't I tell you I ain't never seen no critter what couldn't be killed with a six-gun?"

The effects of our victory and Red's heroic bravery were far-reaching and remarkable. We were regarded as veritable hero-gods, the people literally worshipped Red as the mortal incarnation of a divinity, and old Sarayacu, who fully realized that his king had risked his own life to save him from a terrible and certain death, fairly grovelled at Red's feet. Even Sam and Karen, as servants of such exalted beings, were made much of and were looked upon with a certain amount of awe and respect.

AS far as Saunderson was concerned the adulation and near-veneration meant little, for his entire existence now centered on Mahawilla, for that was her name. Despite his habitual flippancy, his raillery and his bantering manner, he was no inconsequential trifler, but was at heart a most sincere and serious man, and one who never did anything by halves. So, having, as he expressed it, "fallen head over heels in love" with the really charming young thing whom he had literally snatched from the jaws of death, he was all impatience to marry her and chafed at the enforced delay imposed by the priest's injuries.

And when I suggested that a wife might prove a serious impediment when the time came for us to leave the valley, and that he would find her woefully out of place and miserable among his own people, he utterly astounded me by stating that he had no intention of ever leaving the place.

"Nothing doing, as you Americans say," he declared. "I've knocked about and seen a bit of the world in my day, you know, and I've never found a locality that was altogether such a bit of all

right as this. 'Pon my word, what more can a man ask? Delightful climate, wonderful scenery, charming people, an abundance of food, fine raiment, game in the hills, a career, plenty of interesting work to occupy one's hands and mind, all the luxuries one requires, a top-hole position in the community, and nothing to worry about. No, by Jove, not even a stock market or a newspaper."

"But—but," I objected, scarcely able to believe him serious. "How about your people? A man of your position, of your wealth and family can't just drop out of sight—vanish as it were. You—"

"Can't he? Aha, little you know how readily he can, old thing!" he chortled. "Really, you know, you'd better follow the example of Red and myself and take unto yourself a lovely lady and establish yourself as a member of the community. My word, yes, think of the years of research before you, imagine what a glorious time you could have digging up the bones of your wife's respected ancestors! No end of an opportunity, you know, and—by Jove, yes! We might establish a museum and have Red appoint you the royal archaeologist-in-chief!"

I grinned. "A must alluring future," I told him. "But it does not appeal to me. I am a confirmed bachelor, and a wife—even if as wholly charming as your Marawilla or Cherisona—has no place in my life. And, to be frank, with you, there is small satisfaction in making epochal, scientific discoveries in solving archaeological problems unless one can make them public. I'm afraid the average man fails to realize what a conceited and selfish lot we scientists really are. Our greatest delight is derived from creating envy and jealousy in our confreres. No, my friend, I shall leave eventually. But I am in no hurry to go. There is an enormous

amount of work to be done here, and I expect to remain for a year at least. But once my researches are completed, off I go."

SAUNDERSON chuckled. "Man proposes but God disposes," he quoted. "When, in due season, you prepare to depart, what route do you intend to follow, old chap? Don't forget that the way by which we arrived is closed, and I fear that no *détour* has been provided."

"I'm not so sure about that," I said. "There may be more than one way of entering or leaving this place. But only insurmountable obstacles, and forces quite beyond my control, will keep me here after my work has been completed."

To me, the greatest and most important result of our altered status, in the minds of people and priest, was that it gave me unlimited opportunities for investigations and researches. Just as anyone familiar with aboriginal psychology might have foreseen, our interference with and termination of a ceremony of a semi-religious or sacred character, and the destruction of a monster credited with being an evil spirit and immortal, had caused all three of us to be regarded as semi-divine or sacred ourselves. Even the priest felt that way, and, as a result, I was free to explore the temple, to rummage about wherever I desired, and to do things which, previously, would have been deemed desecration. Hence it was directly the result of our humane and chivalrous desire to save three girls from sacrifice that I made the most momentous discovery of my entire career, I might even say, without qualification, the most momentous-discovery ever made in America, the discovery that forever set at rest the innumerable vexed questions and solved the greatest problems and mysteries of America's ancient civilizations.

Having practically completed my

work in the temple, the citadel and the occupied portion of the valley, I turned my attention to the deserted and immeasurably ancient fortress. Here if anywhere, I felt sure, I would find a vast amount of new material. Here, within the labyrinth of passages, rooms, hallways and great chambers rich with sculptures and frescoes, filled with images, idols, and symbolic figures; within this immense structure which had served as a fortress, a temple, a treasure-house and as a dwelling-place, there should be untold stores of archaeological riches. Yet all my expectations and hopes fell far short of the results, and in my most optimistic moments never did I dream that I would be rewarded as I was.

With only Sam to help me and to light the way with torches through the darkest passages and chambers, I commenced a systematic exploration of the vast structure. From the very first I was elated at the things I found. But my heart sank as I realized how woefully inadequate were my means to record or preserve my discoveries. Dozens, scores of note books, might have been filled with written records, measurements and sketches. Hundreds of squeezes might have been made of the ornate and marvellous carvings and sculptures. In some of the rooms, many of the old furnishings still remained. There were carved stone and magnificent metal benches, stools, tables and utensils. Here and there were shreds of glorious textiles, and I might have gathered a collection of pottery, ornaments, weapons and implements that would have filled a museum.

The farther I penetrated into the maze of rooms and corridors the more numerous, the more interesting, the richer were my finds. But I soon realized that to thoroughly explore and study the place would require not months, not

a year, but many years. And as, after the first few days, I became somewhat familiar with the plan of the structure and found that, broadly speaking, there was an obvious similarity and sameness about certain sections, which classified them as belonging to the same period, I mentally mapped out a definite procedure to be followed.

ROUGHLY, my plan was to explore the most ancient portions first, the portions which, I judged, dated back for at least four thousand years, for there, if anywhere, I might expect to find evidences of the earliest inhabitants of the Achcaruna-sapi, with remains which might solve some of the mysteries of their origin and culture.

It was, I think, during the third month that I had been working in the ancient fortress, that I discovered a cleverly-concealed doorway in the wall of a small but ornately-frescoed and sculptured chamber.

Obviously the portal had been sealed up, and it was only because portions of cement-like clay had broken away that I discovered the doorway, for the material, plastered over the crevices between door and wall, had been moulded so perfectly that it appeared a portion of the rock carvings. Filled with curiosity to learn what lay beyond the hidden portal, I labored at it, with Sam's help, and presently succeeded in moving the slab aside.

Before us was a narrow vaulted passage barely high enough to permit me to walk upright, and, as we moved along it, presently to my nostrils came that peculiar pungent, rather musty smell which, to an experienced archaeologist, is infallible evidence of the presence of mummies. Somewhere close at hand were tombs. Tombs of the ancient people who had hewn the immense citadel from the mountain side. My

heart fairly pounded with excitement. Within the stone chambers in the bowels of the mountain the bodies should have remained well preserved, all their wrappings, their apparel, their personal possessions intact. I was about to see what no archaeologist had ever before seen. I was about to look upon the actual beings, the members of an unknown race, who had reached a high state of civilization fully thirty centuries before the birth of Christ!

Stronger and stronger became the unmistakable odor. Abruptly the passageway gave into a circular chamber, and I gazed about. Everywhere about the circumference of the walls were low, arched niches, resembling ovens more than anything else, and in every niche there was a bulky, richly decorated mummy bundle. By the wealth of ornaments, the splendid cloths in which they were wrapped, I knew them to be mummies of most exalted persons—nobles, princes, priests, perhaps. The false heads were provided with masks of gold or silver. Upon them were gorgeous, feather headdresses or golden crowns bearing magnificent plumes. Draped upon the squat, fat bundles were strings of precious and semi-precious stones, ornaments of gold, and breastplates of the precious metal. And resting against several, lashed in place as if held by invisible hands, were carved staffs heavy with gold ornamentation; ceremonial axes with heads of jade, lapis lazuli or other stone, or sceptres of richly-chased gold.

NEVER, I felt sure, had any scientist gazed upon such a wealth of mummies. Never, I knew, had another scientist seen even one mummy of the race whose revered dead were there before me. No one could guess, no one could possibly prophecy what priceless archaeological treasures might be hidden

under the wrappings of those bulky, shapeless figures in their burial niches.

Yet, strangely enough, for the first time in my life, the thought of disturbing them was inexpressibly repugnant to me. Why, I cannot even now explain. I had unwrapped hundreds of mummies, never had I considered them as anything more than scientific specimens. But for some inexplicable reason the idea of unwrapping one of those bundles seemed to be like rank, unpardonable desecration. Then, as I swept my eyes about the burial chamber, my gaze fell upon a door opposite the entrance. In itself it was a marvellous, a unique object, wrought of bronze and silver, decorated with mosaics in turquoise, onyx and agate. And above the lintel were inscribed those same mysterious characters I had seen so many times.

What, I wondered, was concealed behind that door. Was it a treasure-vault filled to overflowing with the surplus possessions of those whose mummified bodies were ranged in their niches about the wall? Did the portal lead to a second burial-chamber, to another passageway, or did it close the tomb of some ancient king?

I stepped forward and examined the door. Never had I seen such a splendid example of metal and mosaic art. What a treasure, if only it could be transported to one of our great museums!

I sighed. Why, I wondered, had Fate played me such a trick? Why had I been destined to come upon such archaeological treasures as no other man had dreamed existed, and yet be unable to collect a single specimen to carry back to my wondering fellow scientists, unable to make a single cast, a single photograph of the marvels I had seen, unable even to make full notes and descriptions of my amazing discoveries?

To my astonishment the door was hinged. To my greater astonishment it

was unfastened. It yielded to my tug, it swung open. I started back, speechless, blinking, half blinded by the blaze of light, by the shimmering, flashing scintillating glory revealed by the opening of the door.

Before my wondering, astounded eyes was an octagonal chamber completely sheathed in overlapping plates of gold. And seated on a gem-encrusted, golden throne was the mummy of a man. A mummy wrapped in a shroud of gold. From somewhere far above, through some shaft cut in the rock, the sun streamed down and filled the chamber with dazzling light that was reflected from the golden walls in a million blinding, flashing points of fire.

Blinking my eyes to the sudden blaze of light after hours of semi-darkness illuminated only by a flickering torch, I gazed transfixed at the silent, gold-swathed figure on the jewelled throne. Here was no grotesque formless bundle topped with a false head and an expressionless mask.

The mummy upon the throne was that of an aged man, a man whose shrivelled, shrunken feet covered by jeweled sandals rested upon the mosaic floor, whose dessicated hands were resting upon his lap, and whose parchment-like face was half-hidden by a luxuriant, white beard that fell to his waist. So natural was his pose that had it not been for the tightly-drawn skin stretched across the bones, and the sightless eyes, he might have been mistaken for a living being. Aside from the gem-studded sandals and the sheet of paper-thin gold wrapped about the body, there were no ornaments, no jewelry upon the mummy. Covering his shoulders was a cape or shawl of deep purple, and upon the head rested a purple cap with upright points or "ears."

Something about the figure seemed strangely familiar to me. I puckered my brows and strove to concentrate my

thoughts. Where had I seen that peculiar eared headdress, that shoulder cape, that bearded face which, shrivelled, distorted, mummified though it was, yet bore a calm benign expression on its dessicated features? Suddenly, almost as a shock, realization came to me. It was the same figure, the same costume, the same face I had seen on sculptures and on pottery effigies, the puzzling, mysterious figure of "The Bearded One" of Incan and pre-Incan mythology!

"WIRA KOCHA!" I exclaimed beneath my breath. "Is it possible, can it be possible?"

Softly, as if fearing I might awaken him from his thousands of years sleep, as reverently as though I were before a holy altar, I approached the silent figure on the ancient throne. Then, for the first time, I noticed that, resting upon his lap beneath the bony fingers of his hands, were fragments of pottery, and that before him, scattered about his feet, were broken shards. Obviously, when first the body had been seated there the objects had been placed upon his lap under his clasped hands. Something, however, had dislodged them. Perhaps it had been the gradual shrinking of tissues through centuries, perhaps some slight earth tremor, had caused the things to slip from his dead fingers and be shattered to fragments upon the floor.

I stooped and picked up one of the shards. And at what I saw a thrill of elation such as I had never known ran through me. The fragment of burned clay was covered with inscribed characters! It was part of a written record, part of a tablet; the first real writing ever discovered among the remains of American civilization!

That in itself was enough to have caused me to become almost delirious with joy. But at my first glance I knew that I had made an even more amazing,

more epochal discovery. I had recognized the characters instantly. They were cuneiform! They were familiar to me, as easily read as Greek!

Forgetting everything, oblivious of my surroundings, of the presence of the strange mummy of the bearded man, I fell upon my knees and feverishly, tense with excitement, I gathered the bits of shattered tablets and with the utmost care began fitting them together. Many pieces were missing altogether—ground to dust by their fall; others were too badly defaced to decipher. But little by little, patiently, like fitting together an intricate jig-saw puzzle, I arranged the fragments until the last piece had been added to the whole.

And there upon the mosaic floor beside the throne, at the feet of the golden-swathed mummy, I read the amazing story revealed to my marveling brain by the rows of angular characters inscribed on the ancient tablet. Several lines were missing, but that which was legible read as follows:

"AND having been driven towards the setting sun for the space of twenty days we came unto a land where dwelt strange people, naked and unshamed and savage. And from these we learned of a great river and of * * * So after many days, passing ever through forests where no men dwelt, we came unto a spot where many strange men who looked upon our faces and our beards with wonder * * * And by these through signs we learned * * * dwelt in this new land and gathered about us some scores of the people whom we had taught to worship Jehovah and to speak our tongue and to cover their bodies with garments like unto our own * * * Crossing the mountains we came unto a fair valley and therein builded houses and a fortress and a temple wherein to worship Jehovah and

His Prophets. It is a goodly land and the people are like unto the Sons of Israel. Yea, verily do I believe that they be of our race * * * but gone astray to become idolators * * * So we have spread the Faith and have won them back to become the Chosen Ones of God, and have taught unto them our arts and our wisdom that when our lives be spent they may forever follow in our footsteps * * * So we named the valley *Ab-Ur-Keni* in memory of that Ur whence we came. And the city we called *Ish-Ka-Ur-Saba* for verily it is the womb which shall bear and bring forth the multitudes who shall carry the faith of our fathers and the name of the Great Jehovah throughout this land. * * * So wheresoever we have carried the word of Israel we have cut deeply into the rocks these Holy words:

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* * * all who pass and see them may know that the * * * Jehovah shall forever endure * * * and may kneel and give prayers and offer sacrifices unto the Lord God of Hosts. * * * feeling that death is near I have set all this down * * * being the last of the score who set forth from * * * to sail into the west where * * * Prophet Elijah had * * * the hand of God directed us. * * * these tablets I shall order to be placed within my tomb * * * to us and through us unto them have been revealed many things. Yea, verily, such wonders as no man hath before seen * * * And it has come to pass, that they have surpassed all the tribes of Israel, the craftsmen of Egypt and the artisans of the Hitites and of Babylon * * * never have they become scribes.

Nay, neither those who have risen to become priests and teachers * * * the hand of Jehovah has set His seal saying: 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.' * * * shalt not perish from the earth nor be forgotten in the minds of men, unto these tablets I, T'cha Ben Nephi Lehi of the House of Cora-ancha, have set my * * *

THE world seemed to reel about me. I was in a daze. Here beneath my marvelling, incredulous eyes was the evidence of the origin of the lost civilizations of America. Broken, fragmentary as they were, with great gaps in the narrative inscribed upon them, yet the tablets were the indisputable proof that men of Semitic blood, Israelites, had come over seas and had established the religion, the civilization, the arts of the pre-Incans. Everything was clear to me. Even the mystery of the names was solved. Wira Kocha, the Creator! Why had it never occurred to me that it was but a slightly garbled and corrupted form of Jehovah? And the priest of Israel who had inscribed the tablets—T'cha Ben:—Chavin, of course! He had been of the "House of Cora-ancha! What more natural than that his disciples should have named their temples in his honor—the Kori-Canchas.

Even the origin of the name of the valley was solved—Ish-Ka Ur-Saba—The birthplace of multitudes! How similar to Achcaruna-sapi, now that I had the key. Yet during the countless centuries that had passed since the city had been founded, the names of town and valley had been transposed, for Sarayacu—Ye gods! even the priest bore a Semitic name, merely a slight variant of Sara-a-Akur—had called the valley Achcaruna-Sapi and the city Urkon-Ab-Ur-Keni: The New Ur. And the broken tablet, written more than thirty centuries ago, forever set at rest all con-

troversy, all theories and suppositions in regard to the strange inscription. It was a prayer, the equivalent of the beginning of our own Lord's Prayer!

Had I not already solved the mystery of the cyclopean masonry and the incredible stone-cutting feats of the pre-Incans, the tablet would have revealed that secret also, for the long-dead T'cha Ben Hephth Lehi had written that "the rock was made soft unto clay to be moulded by the potters' hands."

With a deep indrawn breath, I gathered up the shattered tablet, and reverently restored it to its original resting place beneath the yellow, shrivelled hands of the mummy. And as I did so, and glanced at the shrunken face with its patriarchal white beard, I could have sworn that a gratified smile hovered for an instant on the fleshless lips.

CHAPTER XIII

Adios!

A YEAR and more had passed since we had entered the hidden valley of Achcaruna Sapi; a delightful pleasant year of happiness and contentment and of marvelous scientific achievement on my part.

Within the palace there was now a princeling, a tiny scion of royalty whose red hair gave assurance that the dynasty of Huata Pilcu would be perpetuated. And in the home of Inchukeespi. the War Lord, there was a wee lassie with her father's sunny hair who, so Marawilla and Cherisona both agreed, would one day become the bride of the heir to the throne. Old Sarayacu, who fairly adored his great-grandson—and who, so Cherisona laughingly declared, neglected his religious duties to be with the kiddy—had changed greatly. From an austere, fanatical high-priest and steeped in legendary superstition and mysticism, he had been transformed to a

gentle, kindly old man, quite broad-minded and ready to live and let live, and much preferring to bask in the sun or frolic with the kiddies, rather than to fast and pray within the temple. Our presence in the valley, and the events which had taken place, had rudely shaken his implicit belief in the mythology and sacrosanct traditions of his religion, and his blind faith in the infallibility of prophecies had received a severe jolt on that day when Red had saved him from death in the jaws of the dinosaur. Even though the Red Haired One had arrived as foretold, and had been crowned King of Urkon; even though he had destroyed the monster as scheduled, there had been nothing in the ancient prophecy which had warned the priest that he would be cast into the pit and would come within a hair's breadth of serving as a substitute for a victim of the sacrifice. It had been a most unpleasant and terrifying experience, and had served to arouse Sarayacu's resentment which he had manifested by repudiating the prophecy altogether.

More, Cherisona had avidly adopted Christianity—or at least Red's particular version of the Faith, while Marawilla had become a staunch convert to the Church of England. Naturally, Sarayacu had been properly scandalized by this straying from the fold of two of the most prominent members of his flock. But when I had talked with him, and had pointed out the striking similarities between our religion and his own; that we both worshipped a Supreme God or Creator, that we both believed in an immortal soul and a resurrection, in a Heaven and a Hell and in a Divine Son of God born of woman, and that, after all the only real differences in our faiths were those of creeds rather than fundamentals, he appeared to be quite mollified and content. But I must admit that

I was tremendously surprised—and not a little amused—when I visited the temple a few days later and discovered that he had placed a cross beside the golden image of the sun.

Though there was still a great deal left to be done, I had worked industriously and had accomplished amazing results in my archaeological researches. And despite the fact that I well knew how hard the parting would be, and though I hated the thought of leaving, yet I felt that it was high time that I should attempt to return and give to Science and the world the results of my discoveries.

I had expected protests and opposition from my companions, and when I broached the subject, and announced that I intended to make my departure in a few days, I was flabbergasted by Red's reply.

"O. K.," he said. "Me and you've been pardners long enough for me to learn there ain't no use tryin' to argue with you, once you've set your mind to anything. You're as stubborn as a Missouri mule, Doc. If you're boun' to go, you'll go, an' it's just wastin' time an' breath to try an' stop you. Mebbe I'm king here, but you're still my boss and what you say goes with me. But hell! we sure will miss you a heap. 'Twon't seem like 'twas the same place without you around. Still an' all, me an' Sandy, we've savvied you'd be pullin' stakes an' driftin' some of these days, so we kinder prepared for it, like."

"Rath-er!" exclaimed Saunderson. "We can't have you wandering about through the mountains aimlessly, you know, and never getting anywhere. By Jove, no, not a bit of it! In that case the world would never know what you have discovered, and the jolly old scientific chaps wouldn't have an oppor-

tunity to quarrel over what you told them and call you no end of a liar. So we hatched out a scheme to see you through, as one might say. The main object is that beastly old bridge where we clambered out of the cañon. But these beggars here could throw a bridge across that chasm in a jiffy. They are really marvellous at that sort of thing, you know. We'll call the standing army to escort you across the valley where those horrible little camouflaged savages dwell—I don't fancy they will attack a large force—and I'll send on a party with you to bridge the cañon and accompany you until you are within easy reach of settlements or a road. Then when my men return they can destroy the bridge, tear down the old ladder and we'll be quite safe from being overrun with beastly tourists and missionaries and all that sort of thing. You see, Doctor, we trust implicitly in you not to reveal the precise location of our little Eden, not even in the cause of science."

"You appear to have made complete arrangements to speed the parting guest," I said. "I certainly appreciate your thoughtfulness. But, honestly, you needn't send as escort with me beyond the bridge. I'm quite sure the old trail will be practical beyond that point."

"Ah, but you'll require carriers, old dear!" exclaimed Saunderson. "An eminent archaeologist and his faithful Man Friday can't be expected to carry their own luggage, you know."

I laughed. "What luggage we have could be carried in our pockets," I reminded him.

Red winked and Saunderson grinned.

"Not by a damn sight, it couldn't," declared the former. "Hell, you don't reckon to go out of here without nothin' to show for your time an' work do you? Nothin' doin', Doc. You're a-goin' to pack out all of that junk what you've got

over there to your place. Yep, an' me an' Cherisona an' her grandad an' Sandy an' the rest of us is aimin' to give you a sort of good-bye present like. Me, I'm a settin' pretty with more damn gold an' jools knockin' about than Henry Ford an' old man Rockefeller could buy between 'em, an' just so much junk up here. So why the blazes shouldn't you have some of it?"

"BUT—but," I stammered, really too overcome and surprised to speak coherently. "Really—"

"Red's right, distinctly right!" declared Saunderson without waiting to hear what I was trying to say. "My sainted aunt! Do you fancy any of your scientific friends would believe your extraordinary statements unless you possessed concrete proof? No indeed, not a bit of it, old top! And really, you know, the jolly old pelf is no end of a convenience in the so-called centres of civilization, absolutely, yes!"

"Now you're talking horse-sense, Mister," agreed Red. "Shucks, what's the sense in bein' a king if you can't hand out a million or two to a old pardner?"

"Righto!" chuckled Saunderson. "And 'pon my word, what's the sense in being an archaeologist if one cannot produce the proofs of one's prehistoric pudding, as one might say."

When, a few days later, I bade farewell to Cherisona and Marawilla and the two kiddies, and started on my journey, the entire population of the valley had gathered along the roads and in the plaza to see me off. With the miniature army of warriors as an escort, we marched across the valley, Saunderson and Red walking by my side, old Sarayacu borne in a litter accompanying us, and a dozen stalwart *yanacunas* or carriers laden with my specimens and my riches bringing up the rear.

At the lower portal of the ancient

fortress the priest bade me an affectionate farewell and called upon all the divinities of both his own and the Christian faith to safeguard me on my journey.

Onward through the narrow pass we marched, and into the valley of the Chameleon men, the soldiers with ready weapons forming a hollow square about us and the carriers. But there was no sign of the amazing pygmies, and without opposition or molestation we reached the cliff where the chain ladder still dangled from above. Hours were required for the carriers and my escort to climb, one at a time, to the summit of the cliff. But at last it was accomplished.

"Good bye and good luck, old man!" cried Saunderson gaily, though I noticed a strange huskiness in his tones. "If you ever change your mind and decide you'd like to return and settle down in Achcaruna Sapi, just radio to me, you know! By Jove, yes, I almost forgot! When you arrive at your destination just slip this into an envelope and paste a stamp on it and post it to my solicitors, that's a good chap!"

He handed me a sealed packet with the address of his London solicitors scrawled across it.

"Just a note to the old coves to put their minds at rest and prevent them from starting undesirable enquiries as to my whereabouts, you know," he explained. "Cheerio, old dear!"

"Well, so long, Doc," exclaimed Red as he gripped my hand. "I'm damned sorry you ain't stayin' on with us. But shucks, mebbe you wouldn't be so all-fired content just to let things slide, like I be. Hell, who'd ha' thought when I signed up for your expedition that 'twas a-goin' to end by me bein' a king an' gettin' hitched up to a wife, an' havin' kids an' all?"

He spat, swallowed hard and scratched the back of his neck. "Well, I reckon

there ain't nothin' more I can say," he muttered. "I gotta be gettin' along back or some hombre'll be grabbin' the throne away from me. Hey, look after Doc, Sam, you black rascal. Adios, Doc!"

Without incident we traversed the narrow trail to the cañon where the remnants of the ancient bridge hung from the verge of the abyss. One of the men scrambled like a lizard up the cliff, to reappear, standing upright on a jutting pinnacle with a coil of rope in hand. For an instant he poised there, fully fifty feet above our heads. Then he leaped into space!

I CAUGHT my breath. The fellow was deliberately plunging to his death. But no! The next moment he alighted safely on the narrow ledge across the gorge. It seemed impossible, incredible. No human being could have jumped directly across the gap before us, but from his higher elevation he had sprung outward and downward and had made it.

Quickly the men beside me knotted larger ropes to the line he had carried across. Rapidly he hauled them in and made them fast to the perforated rocks which had served to secure the original bridge. Then, as readily as though the sagging, swaying ropes had been a solid footway, half a dozen men swarmed over and joined their comrade on the further side. Rope after rope was pulled across, and in an incredibly short time a crude suspension bridge once again spanned the chasm. It seemed a frail, cobwebby thing, too flimsy a structure to support a man's weight, but the porters with their burdens passed unhesitatingly over it, and though it rocked and swayed horribly as we stepped upon it, and Sam, clutching the sagging ropes, inched his way along flat on his stomach, we crossed in safety.

Beyond the bridge the way was com-

paratively easy. True, in a few spots, landslides had blocked the old trail and we were forced to clamber perilously over the loose *débris* where a misstep or a dislodged stone would have hurled us to death, but there were no insurmountable obstacles. Slowly, gradually, our way led upward, until at last we skirted the foot of a vast glacier and commenced to descend. Around and about the trail wound, following the contours of the ranges, until, late one afternoon, we came to the head of a triangular gently-sloping puna. The leader of the *yanacunas* declared it was too late to go farther, and there in the shadows of the mountain side we camped for the night.

Sam's shout awakened me. "Wha la, Chief!" he exclaimed. "They gone! They clean gone. Yaas, sir, Chief, they deserted we!"

I leaped to my feet. The sun was rising back of the mountain range, and it was bright daylight. But not a man of our party was visible!

Suddenly Sam grasped my arm. "Look, Chief! Look see there!" he cried.

A mile or so from where we stood, moving across the puna toward us, was a motor truck!

There is little more to relate. Dashing forward, shouting, waving our arms to attract the attention of those on the truck, we halted suddenly in amazement. Not one hundred yards from where we had camped a smooth Macadam highway crossed the puna.

Ten minutes later, with our belongings stowed in the body of the lumbering vehicle, we were rumbling over the road toward San Isidro, and twenty-four hours later, were back in Lima with its electric lights, its motor cars and concrete buildings, its busy thoroughfares and hurrying crowds, its trolley cars and motion picture theatres.

THE disappearance of the Honorable Ian Saunderson, created no comment, no stir in the world, such as I had expected. Those who knew him and took an interest in his affairs were accustomed to his wanderings and his habit of vanishing from the haunts of civilized man for months or years at a time. No doubt, in the missive he gave me and which I mailed to his lawyers, he stated that he might not return for a long time. Perhaps he even informed them that he never intended to return. But he had no near relatives, his financial and business affairs had been conducted by his solicitors for many years, and his continued absence did not in the least detract from the income they derived from that source. And as they were accustomed to being entrusted with secrets which they deemed nobody's business, there was no reason for proclaiming their client's absence from the house-tops, as it were.

Of course no one bothered about Red. Ever a rolling stone liable to appear or disappear anywhere, it was assumed—by the few who gave him more than a passing thought—that he had merely followed his erratic inclinations and had parted company with me somewhere "in the interior."

But I have often thought—and have chuckled at the thought—of how shocked and surprised the "old coves" of London solicitors would be did they but know that the Honorable Ian Saunderson was the War Lord of Urkon, and was dwelling in happiness and contentment with a native wife in the valley of Achcaruna Sapi. And how dumbfounded would be those who had known Red, had they learned that the ex-ranger, the devil-may-care, easy-going chronically "broke" Jimmy Neil, was a reigning king possessing countless millions in treasure; the richest potentate in all the world!

In the Realm of Books

Conducted by C. A. BRANDT

THE following two books cannot be considered as science fiction, but with the well known fact in view, that a steady diet of even your favorite dish, will finally jade your palate and spoil your appetite, I will review from time to time other than science fiction books, which I deem to have outstanding merits and which I think will be of interest to our readers.

The first book: "The Hundredth Man" is the Autobiography of a drug addict. From time to time we have encountered within the pages of this and similar magazines, certain stories dealing with the terrible drugs which alien civilizations have developed on strange planets and the devastating effects such alien drugs had on the terrestrials. However we might quote an ancient German proverb and say with a slight permissible variation: "Warum in die Ferne Schweifen, sieh das Boese liegt so nah." True enough, the habit forming narcotics produced by our own civilization (Sic) are bad enough and dangerous enough, and any publisher who publishes a book which throws light on this particular subject by pointing out the underlying dangers of such drugs, deserves a great deal of credit, as for instance Mr. Claude Kendall, 70 Fifth Ave., New York, who recently published: "The Hundredth Man" by Cecil De Lenoire, 288 pages, \$3.00.

This book is said to be a true Autobiography. The Author, Mr. Denoir describes and calls himself "the hundredth man," as it is a well known fact that out of a hundred drug addicts only one has the courage and the stamina to undergo the truly terrible Lambert and Towne treatment, and emerge sane and cured. De Quincey's unjustly famous book: "Confessions of an Opium Eater," always struck me as a rather impudent and blatant advertisement, extolling the virtues and delights of opium, and it was in all likelihood written as such by order of the then existing dope syndicates. Why it is still considered one of the classics of English literature is another riddle of the Universe. De Quincey's book probably produced more drug addicts and more revenue for the drug rings than the combined efforts of all the drug peddlers in the world. Its insidiousness lies in the fact that it fairly shouts: "If you do not believe me, try it yourself."

While De Quincey's book still continues to sail under the false flag of literature, Mr. De Lenoire's book makes no pretense at anything. Nevertheless it is a well written, highly dramatic tale. It rings true throughout, it is serious, and absorbingly interesting. It vividly describes the authors adventures and mishaps in America and Europe. Mr. De Lenoire takes us through the underworld of New York, Paris,

London and Hollywood, where no matter how difficult or how costly, the addict will always obtain the panacea for his frayed nerves. When 20 years old, the author came to New York where he got accidentally acquainted with a dope peddler, and with his first snic of heroin, he became a slave of the snow, and was firmly started on his way into the land of the living dead—bye and bye, not only a slave, but an enslaver as well, by becoming a dope peddler himself. Then an undercover man, working for the narcotic squad. Several times he tried to get cured, but the inadequate and careless treatment (what did he expect) in a New York hospital only strengthened the hold the drugs had on him. Returning from London, he lands in Colorado where with the assistance and sympathy of a wise doctor and his staff, he takes the awful Lambert-Tone treatment and is permanently cured.

The great value of De Lenoire's book lies in the fact that it holds out hope for the unfortunate drug addicts by showing a way out. Towards the end of the book the author points out that from his own observations he believes that the use of drugs is on the increase in the big cities he visited, in spite of all the efforts which are made to stop the traffic, but as long as there are greedy politicians, there will always be plenty of drugs, drug peddlers and addicts.

"Before the Dawn," by John Taine, published by The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, Md., 247 pages, \$2.00.

John Taine is the "Nom de Plume" of Dr. Eric Temple Bell, Professor of Mathematics of the California Institute of Technology who has already quite a number of first class scientific romances to his credit. Some of these were published in book form only: "The Purple Sapphire, Green Fire, Quail's Invention, the Gold Tooth, etc", others have appeared in this and other magazines, devoted to scientific fiction, such as "The White Lily" and "Seeds of Life" (A. S.). But no matter, whether a "Taine" story appears as a serial, or as a book, you can take it for granted that anything John Taine writes, is not only interesting, but it is always based upon a unique and absolutely new idea. And, whatever the idea is, and no matter how far fetched it may seem at first it is always presented and worked out in a perfectly plausible manner. He writes convincingly at all times, and he never uses any "literary crutches," or leans upon somebody else's ideas. He is always "John Taine" and "John Taine" only. He is the perfect Story Teller. He

writes with a beautiful fluency of style, which only a few science fiction authors approach. He never makes the mistake other less gifted authors make, of using strange and unusual words in order to create an impression. He never produces "scientific gibberish." If Taine explains a machine (yet to be invented), his description is an explanation, and you can almost visualize its structure.

In "Before the Dawn" Mr. Taine again presents us with a brand new idea. Working on the theory (possible and plausible), that all light waves leave and have left an imperishable imprint on the surface of all inorganic objects, similar to the impressions made by sound waves on suitable materials, *à la* phonograph records, he invents a few machines (in the story of course) which unscramble and analyze these light impressions, and with the aid of a television machine and a three dimensional projector he is then capable of delving into the prehistoric times and makes them come to life again. We see the earth, as it was millions of years ago, aeons before even the forerunner of Man was only a protoplasmic possibility. We see the Saurians in all their gory ferocity, and we see them at close range, witnessing their love making, their family life, such as it was, their daily battles for existence, and finally the great migration to the South, when an Ice Age descends upon the earth.

All the scenes in the book are described with a fidelity and a realism, that it almost reads like the detailed report of a trained scientific observer.

"Before the Dawn," which Mr. Taine calls a work of "Fantascience" is heartily recommended to all our readers.

King Cobra, by Mark Channing, published by B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 309 pages, \$2.00.

The book starts with the kidnapping of Diana Lindsay and the murder of her father, the British Resident Advisor, by the King Cobra also known as Alam Khan, a savage hillman, six feet nine inches of concentrated devilry. This fierce outlaw carries Diana off to his inaccessible fortress in the wilds of the Himalayas. There he installs her in his Harem, where Diana makes friends with Shireen, the Cobra's favorite wife, who finally helps her to escape. Major Colin of the British Secret Service, follows her, but is also taken prisoner, and is at first confined to the dungeons underneath the Cobra's palace, an old church built by the legendary Prester John. There are additional villains a-plenty—the Veiled One, whom even the Cobra fears—Khooon a misformed Tartar Dwarf claiming direct descent from Genghis Khan—an exceedingly mean and treacherous Eunuch and Shiv the pet tigress of the Cobra. This unholy gang, hacked and amplified by thousands of ferocious and bloodthirsty hillmen is plotting the death and downfall of all the British and for nearly 290 pages Diana and

Colin have the very devil of tough sledding dodging tortures, assassinations and everything.

Colin, Diana and other British prisoner are about to be executed, but instead the Cobra gets it in the W. K. neck, and the prisoners make their escape. They flee through a maze of subterranean dungeons. They exterminate the Veiled One and shortly before they emerge into the open they discover the tomb of Prester John, who had been buried with a couple of carloads of pearls and precious stone, not to mention vast stores of gold.

A rather intriguing note of mystery is provided by the timely appearance of an Indian Yoghi, who projects his astral body and points the way out of several jams.

To all those of our readers who like "human interest" stories and to those who like thrillers, with plenty of fast and furious action, these two books are recommended.

"The Conquest of Space," by David Lasser.

Published by the Penguin Press, 18 Leroy Street, New York, 262 pages, \$2.00.

Apologies are due to Mr. Lasser for not having reviewed his book sooner. It was simply one of those literary accidents, where an important book had been overlooked, and though it was published over a year ago, this department feels that it will be of great interest to our readers to hear about it, as the book has lost nothing of its value since.

"The Conquest of Space" deals with rocket flight, its achievements so far and its marvelous possibilities. Our readers are quite familiar with rockets and their space penetrating possibilities, because hundreds of authors have used a rocket propelled vehicle in their science fiction stories to traverse space, and in Mr. Lasser's book we learn authentically for the first time what has been done to make such scientific dreams come true. We are quite sure that many of our readers are mentally registering a protest: "Dream—yes, but will it ever come true? Impossible!" But, as it has often been pointed out in our editorials, the word "impossible" does not exist any more for us. Fiction of to-day becomes the fact of to-morrow. You would have cried "impossible" too, about thirty or thirty-five years ago if somebody had mentioned Television, Radio, the Transatlantic Telephone, aeroplanes, etc., etc. All dreams of yesterday, come true to-day and so rocket flight will become a fact. First it will revolutionize travel on earth. When one can reach Berlin and San Francisco within an hour by means of a rocket, who wants to travel snail-like by train or in an overgrown canoe? Then will come trips to the moon (another one of Jules Verne's dreams come true) and to the inner planets and probably with new discoveries in fuel, trips to the outermost edges of our universe.

It is sensational and so fascinating that we cannot do anything else but recommend it thoroughly to all of our readers as a very valuable addition to their libraries.

DISCUSSIONS

In this department we shall discuss every month topics of interest to readers. The editors invite correspondence on all subjects directly or indirectly related to the stories appearing in this magazine. In case a special personal answer is required, a nominal fee of 25c to cover time and postage is required.

A Genuine, Hard-Working Critic—Thanks for Your Appreciation of the Editorials

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

If you must publish reprints, heed the voices of your readers, and put in some old favorites that have already appeared in "Our" magazine. Let me suggest a few:

1. The Moon Pool.
2. The Skylark Stories by all means.
3. Ralph Milne Farley's Radio Series.
4. Station X.

Now for those guys that kick about the paper. Are they buying the mag for the reading matter or for the paper? If they want good paper, let 'em go buy some bond. I've read other so called Science Fiction mags., and they're—well, they're just nil in comparison with our good old mag. So why kick? But—where did the Spring and Summer editions of the Quarterly go to?

I read your mag, or should I say Our?, ever since the copy in which "A World at Bay" appeared right up to the "Stone from the Green Star." Then I couldn't get AMAZING STORIES for love or money until the Canadian Edition came out in September, 1933.

The stories before the "Great Oblivion," that period in which there was no Canadian edition and during which our mag. didn't come over here, that I liked best, were:

"The Ambassador from Mars" by Harl Vincent. I've read this story six times.

"Mernos" by L. C. Kellenberger. Read 5 times.

"Last Man" by Wallace G. Bert. Read 7 times.

"Terror of the Streets" by G. McLociard. Read 6 times.

"Moon Strollers"—J. Rogers Ullrich—Read 6 times.

"Microscopic Buccaneers"—H. Vincent. Read 5 times. Give us more stories like this. Ps-s-s-t, Harl Vincent, don't be angry, but after writing a story about a planetary atom, how about this idea: That we are living on a planetary atom which helps compose an immeasurably larger world. How about a yarn on that—huh?

"Cold Light"—Wm. Lemkin, Ph. D. Read 5 times.

"Vampires of the Desert"—A. Hyatt Verrill. Read 5 times. Remember that one, old timers? Great, wasn't it?

"When the Atoms Failed"—J. W. Campbell, Jr. Read 5 times. Say-y-y—Mr. Editor, what's happened to Campbell? I don't see his good stories lately. Don't tell me you've let

him slip through your fingers? I hope not. "Fourth Dimensional Space Penetrator"—Julian Kendig, Jr. Read 5 times.

And now for the AMAZING STORIES since the "Great Oblivion."

Winter—1933—Quarterly:
"The Second Deluge." The first time I've read it—and oh boy! Was it SWELL!

"A Winter Amid the Ice"—Jules Verne. Gr-r-r—Rotten—I—I—I Nuff said! Verne may have been "IT" in his day, but now—I feel sorry for his "fiction." Harrumph!

Fall—1934—Quarterly:
Reprint Edition—Hot Ziggat! 50c well spent. "Barton's Island"—Good.

"Sunken World"—Stanton A. Coblenz. Atlantean tale. Excellent.

"Malignant Entity"—O. A. Kline. I like science-detective-fiction stories—so—give us more like this one.

The Monthly since Sept. 1933 (Oct. issue) I'm mentioning only the best:

"Men Without Shadows"—Coblenz. Fine.
"Theft of the Wash'n Monument"—Arthur, Jr. Fine.

Dec. 33—"Time's Mausoleum"—Good. Jones idea of the "Flood" is good, and there's something in it, too.

"Four Dimensional Escape"—Good.
January—34—"Master of Dreams"—Excellent.

February—34—"Terror out of Space"—Started out good but ended up rotten. Comment so-so.

April—34—"Cat's Eye"—Excellent. Keep up the good work, Vincent. I'm with you.

"The Mentalicals"—Good.
Poe's Reprint—"Ouch"—!!!

May—34—"The Lost City"—Wonderful—beats even "Triplanetary" which is saying a good deal.

July—34—"Beam Transmission"—Good, but I think it was left unfinished. I'd like to know where the author thought that planet was.

Sept. 34—An all Star issue:

"The Moon Pirates"—Excellent.

"The Plutonian Drug"—Excellent.

"Thru The Andes"—Excellent.

"The Master Minds of Venus"—Being a radio experimenter I took to this story like a duck takes to water—Super-excellent.

"The Barrier"—Good.

"The Molecule Trapper"—Poor hero! Fair. Keep Morey painting covers. It's hard to say which covers I like the best. But the following, I believe, are equal:

November, 1933.

May, 1934

September, 1934.

Now, may I make a suggestion or two? Have more illustrations for the stories. Put in a "Science News" of the month section.

Compliments—keep up the good work, Editor. I've got no kick coming. Stick to the small size, its the handiest, but return to the old "Amazing Stories" comet title, it looks best. Keep Morey on the staff.

Honor Roll of Authors:

Dr. E. E. Smith

Harl Vincent

Stanton Coblenz

Neil R. Jones

John W. Campbell, Jr.

A. Hyatt Verrill

Milton R. Peril

W. K. Sonnemann

T. O'Connor Sloane, Ph. D. for don't you write those magnificent editorials?

MR. LESLIE A. CROUTCH

Perry Sound,

Ontario, Canada

[We are always glad when AMAZING STORIES is spoken of by a correspondent as "our" magazine because we want you to like it so much that you will feel a property right in it. The writer feels like blushing at his appearance in your honor list. An editor's work is to please people and reciprocally he is pleased when he pleases, that is why a letter such as yours is most acceptable.—EDITOR.]

A Very Good and Amusing Letter from a Young Correspondent, We Presume

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

Just finished the September issue. Boy! It was a wham-bang! It was worth two bits for just one story alone—"The Master Minds of Venus" by William K. Sonnemann. If you have any more stories by this author, let's have them right away! He certainly made a hit in his debut, as far as I'm concerned anyway. I feel sure that a lot of other readers will feel the same. I guess the other stories were O. K., but they seemed insignificant by comparison. You shouldn't have put them in the same issue with such a story. Here are the others in order of their merit. 1—"The Plutonian Drug," good, but the ending was too plainly foreseen. 2—"The Barrier," good. 3—"The Molecule Trapper," fair. 4—"The Beam"—Aha! a chance to give Milton Kaletsky a dose of his own medicine. Science was correct, or so it seemed to me, but I'm no authority on science, so I'll leave it be. But as a story phht! Of course I'll admit I've read worse stories, but I couldn't resist the temptation to rag Mr. Kaletsky a bit, so he could feel what it's like to get some criticism only part as merciless as he gave another author not long ago. "The Moon Pirates" looks good from the illustration, but I'm waiting for all the installments before I read it.

From the title "Through the Andes" looks

like a reprint. Is it? I haven't read it anyway, so it doesn't matter much. And while we're on the subject of reprints, if you must have reprints by those ancient writers Poe, Verne, etc., why not give us some of A. Conan Doyle's stuff? "The Maracot Deep," "The Lost World," "The Poison Belt" and his short stories on science fiction to mention only a few of his stories. I'm sure not as many of your readers have read "The Poison Belt" for instance, as have read Poe's "Gold-bug."

I also read your very good Editorial. Keep up the good work, it was interesting.

Before I turn off the gas, I've one more word to say about "The Master Minds of Venus." One of the big reasons I liked it was because it was so logical. All these stories about earth invasion by Venus or Mars are pretty good reading, but its seems illogical that a civilization highly developed enough for space-travel, would not have first seen the foolishness of war, and be peace-loving people as Mr. Sonnemann pictures them. If only it were true! But its too good to be true.

This letter will probably be in the waste basket anyway and if it isn't I'll be taking up too much space in Discussions, so I'll knock off and go to bed.

I'll make my last words kind ones: I think you are improving and will soon be the best science fiction mag on the market.

I'll repeat my statement I made in my last letter that I would like to correspond with anybody between the ages of 15 and 18 interested in science fiction. Especially anyone outside of the U. S. A.

ARTHUR L. WIDNER, JR.,

79 Germain Avenue,

Quincy, Mass.

["The Master Minds of Venus" is the first story by this author to have appeared in our magazine. Your commendation will perhaps operate to elicit another story from him. The story by A. Hyatt Verrill, to which you refer, is not a reprint, and we think it is one of his best. When one of the leading rulers of a nation says that war ennobles it, it looks as though so great an intellect as his has shown itself to be sadly astray on this point.—EDITOR.]

About Serials and Reprints

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

We have been reading AMAZING STORIES since 1928, and have never thought it necessary to criticize as much as some of your readers, and we continue to buy, which may not be praise direct but answers in the long run. But the September issue is just too much, beginning two serials—I know that a lot of people like the things, so there's no objection to one, but when two must start in the same issue with only one decently long story, either the serial hunters get more than two-bits worth or we don't get ours.

Dr. Keller and Dr. Smith seem to be the favorites with most of the others running close

second. The magazine on the whole is much better than the copies of a few years ago, the covers are good, and the illustrations are all O. K. Hope you follow a reader's suggestion to leave off Poe's works, and Wells' story was just over my head, so I won't comment on it. The Editorial is always good as well as interesting, so please keep it up.

Does it seem quite the thing for two authors to ding darn each other in the open section of A. S.? It may be all right, but it just doesn't seem quite the thing.

The very best to you and the writers of our stories and now "Silence re-ascends her solemn throne."

T. W. McKINETER,
C. A. DAMRON
Pikeville, Ky.

[If you will follow our list of authors, you will find that your desires are being carried out. We wish, however, that you would tell us which one of Wells' stories you refer to as being "just over my (your) head". We would be indebted to you if you would tell us the month and the year of the issue in which it appeared. Dr. Smith did not write his first letter for Discussions columns, but we supposed that he did, as no request was made not to use it.—EDITOR.]

Dr. Edward E. Smith's Stories Commented
On—Dr. Keller's "Inimitable Manner"—
Reprints and Humorous Stories

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

Somehow I was disappointed with "Triplanetary." While it was better than many interplanetary serials, it did not come up to expectations. At first I thought my appreciation of STF was growing stale, so I read "Triplanetary" about three times, trying to analyze my dislike for it. I liked it better after each reading, but I still think it is inferior to Dr. Smith's other stories. I rated "Skylark Three" as the best story I have read, with "Spacehounds of IPC" second.

I have not read "The Skylark of Space," but I am very anxious to do so. I have the October and November, 1931, issues of AMAZING STORIES, which contain, complete, Jack Williamson's serial, "The Stone from the Green Star," plus the July, 1931, issue, containing Part I of "Spacehounds of IPC," which three issues I would like to trade for a "Skylark of Space" set. Anyone willing to trade, please write to me. My mags are in perfect condition.

I have just read Dr. Keller's new story, "Life Everlasting," and I greatly enjoyed it. In a way, there was nothing to it—I mean, everything that the hero did was undone—but psychology was brought out beautifully in Dr. Keller's inimitable manner. I thought it well worth reading. I have enjoyed all of Keller's stories.

"The Velocity of Escape," in the August issue, was good and calls for a sequel. It was

slightly melodramatic, but still good, and there was plenty of science.

"Photo Control" I thought was very good. It seemed very plausible, so plausible that I wondered why modern automobiles could not be equipped as were those in the story.

Everybody says something about reprints, so I'd like to give my opinion. I did not like Poe's reprints, because one can read them anywhere. I believe, though, that some of the rare classics, such as "The Blind Spot," or, at the very worst, some of Jules Verne's works which are hard to obtain, should be reprinted occasionally. I enjoyed "The Second Deluge" and "The Menace" in the Quarterly, as I had never read them before. I have seen announcements of your latest Quarterly, evidently a reprint number, and I will buy it even though I have the original edition of "Barton's Island."

Give us more humorous stories like Bob Olsen's "Four-Dimensional Auto-Parker." Olsen is one of your most versatile writers, in my opinion. I especially like his four-dimensional stories, because his explanations seem so clear. I read one, then start drawing tesseracts and try to imagine four right angles at right angles to each other, and then I read the story again.

I would like to see an occasional story based on chemistry; I am studying at the University of Nebraska for a degree in chemical engineering, so the subject naturally interests me.

If you will print this letter, or at least the second paragraph of it, in Discussions, I would greatly appreciate it, for I am anxious to obtain a "Skylark of Space" set.

RICHARD G. KERLIN
Linwood, Nebraska

[Dr. Keller has a distinct faculty of writing which is very characteristic. When that is supplemented by his national standing, as an authority on the human mind and its psychology and on psychiatry, the result is illustrated by such a story as "Life Everlasting." We doubt if Bob Olsen can resist yielding to the praise which he has won from our readers for his humorous narration.—EDITOR.]

Good and Severe Remarks on Our Stories—
Morey Is Liked

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

This is a report on the September issue of A. S.

Editorial:—Both interesting and instructive. Let's have more. Serials: "The Moon Pirates" starts off well—a bit extravagant however. "Through the Andes"—There's a story after my own heart. I hope further developments make it an AMAZING STORY. Short stories: "The Plutonian Drug" contains a bit of philosophy but it is brought out rather unconvincingly. However, it is a nice story. "The Master Minds of Venus" is perfect. Let's have a sequel. "The Beam" is stupid and illogical. Mr. Kaletsky forgets that human propagation

is made possible only by mating of two sexes. It is impossible for man to subdivide like the yeast cell. "The Barrier" is just another story as far as I'm concerned. The story about the "Molecule Trapper" is a bit hazy. Excepting for the last three stories mentioned, I found this month's issue of A. S. very interesting and entertaining.

Morey did a good job of the cover if you ask me.

In general, I think that A. S. is not as good as it used to be. I am not a constant reader of the mag., but I read at least eight of the issues per year and one or two of the Quarterlies.

By the way, I liked the "Sunken World" in the Fall issue of A. S. very much. I presume you received my letter on this story.

Here's to more and better A. S.!

CAMILLO MASSONI

224 2nd St., N. E.

Washington, D. C.

[There is little that we can say in comment on your letter as it definitely speaks for itself and does so very clearly. We firmly believe that you will like future issues of AMAZING STORIES. Of course we always want to make it better, but improvement is not always easy to effect. It is precisely such critical letters as yours in which the writer does not hesitate to speak out his mind, if we may put it so, that are of value and in a sense may serve as a guide for one's steps.—EDITOR.]

A Very Lively Letter from Maryland—But We Place Dr. Keller Far Higher Than You Do

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

The August issue of AMAZING STORIES left little to be desired. The only desire was that "Measuring a Meridian" had been substituted by a modern science fiction novel. Please, please don't give us any more of Poe or Verne reprints. But how about the reprinting of the Skylark stories. You promised us in the first 1934 issue that they would be reprinted in the near future.

The leading story in the August issue was Henry J. Kostkos's "North God's Temple," one of the most beautifully written pieces of science fiction to appear in AMAZING STORIES for some time. Joe W. Skidmore's "The Velocity of Escape" earned second place. It contained a wealth of scientific fact. "Shot Into Space," Isaac R. Nathanson's smashing short, took third place.

Stanton A. Coblenz knows the human race and its reactions. "In the Footsteps of the Wasp" won fourth place. "Photo Control" was a science fiction story that differed in many respects from the usual run. Congratulations, Mr. Brown, and your story gets fifth place.

It seems almost sacrilegious to put a Dr. Keller story in sixth place. Not that "Life Everlasting" was a poor novel, rather that the other stories were exceptionally good.

Your forecast of serials by Verrill and Jones in September looks very promising. Well,

you've had enough of my ravings. See you next month!

DAN E. ANDERSON

East New Market, Md.

[We can make no comment on your comparative statement of merits because the proverb to the effect that comparisons are odious does not apply to readers of our magazine, but certainly applies most emphatically to Editors. Personally we are a great admirer of Dr. Keller's work and we find that admiration shared by our readers, but an author has to get used to criticisms as no one can please everybody.—EDITOR.]

A New Reader of AMAZING STORIES

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

Although I have read science fiction for several years I am a new reader of AMAZING STORIES. I was putting around the magazine rack in the neighborhood drug store, looking for science fiction, when I happened to notice the blue and cream cover of the June issue. I bought the mag. Now it's a monthly habit. I have just finished the August issue. My favorite stories in the June, July, and August issues were:

June—"Subjugating the Earth."

July—"The Lost City."

August—"The Velocity of Escape."

Leo Morey is a swell artist. I consider the June cover his best work. All in all you've got a swell mag.

An answer from Edwin U. Rothhouse has not been received and is hoped for.

F. S. RECKERT,

1139 So. 6th St.,

Terre Haute, Ind.

[Personally we wish that scientific facts would do what you call "clutter up the stories" much more than they do. We have no story in our mind in which the scientific end overbalances the narration. In only too many cases it has been the other way. You will hear again from Bob Olsen and this very letter of yours may operate as an inspiration.—EDITOR.]

A Delightful Letter from Aussie, Meaning Australia

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

This afternoon I sat down to glance through my first copy of A. S. (Dec. 1933), and never got up again till I had finished the last page. It certainly is an amazing magazine; I'll never miss another copy.

I thought "The Fourth Dimensional Escape" by Bob Olsen, and "Into the Meteorite Orbit" by Frank K. Kelly exceedingly good. Mr. Kelly introduces most delicately the theory of dematerialization and re-integration.

As I have seen this done with small flowers and inanimate objects, I was naturally interested in his method of putting it before the public. Some write on thought transmission now, but I think this is the first time I have seen either subject introduced in this manner.

"The Watch's Soul" by Jules Verne, of

course needs no remarks. It was the outstanding cover design that made me notice your magazine among a pile of others, though I quite agree with Miss Young on the subject of Morey's heroes. They certainly are not handsome judging from the samples to hand.

I am frightfully curious about the "Skylark" reprint mentioned in Discussions, and sincerely hope I haven't missed it.

Please forgive me any impertinence. I can only assure you I don't mean it and have never so thoroughly enjoyed a magazine before.

Your new Aussi Fan

(Mrs.) FAITH DENTON

5 Smith Street

Mascot, Sydney

N. S. W. Australia

[At first sight of your expression to the effect that our magazine is certainly an "Amazing magazine," the writer felt that perhaps you didn't like it, but was very much gratified to find that it was a compliment. Morey may not give handsome features to the characters in our stories, but in most cases strong and rugged features are what are needed. It is quite a gratification to get letters from Australian correspondents as it indicates that our magazine is a good traveler. We thank you for your kind expressions.—EDITOR.]

Life on Atoms—What Is Neptune's Rôle in the Solar System?—Comparisons of Magazines Not Called For

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

In one of the recent letters in the Discussions columns the writer said that there might be life on atoms. I quite agree with you, but is it not also feasible that we might be the atoms and that there is a much more intelligent life that might be stepping on our own system and we never know it. This theory seems to me quite possible because there is an approximately fixed ratio of all planet distances from the sun excepting Neptune. Is it quite beyond our imaginations to picture this? Neptune may be being used as an experiment by intelligent entities whom we cannot see?

Please give us more science, viz: mathematics, physics, astronomy and so on with illustrated examples or written theories.

There is but one fault with AMAZING STORIES and another science fiction magazine, both of which I am an inveterate reader. Some of those who write letters to the Discussions column, throw brickbats. I heartily despise any such writers in the two best science fiction periodicals and ask that you consign all such missives to the morgue.

Since the theory which I have expounded is not patented by me (and I hope no one else) may I suggest that you give the idea to one of your authors, preferably Milton R. Peril or George H. Scheer, Jr. It would make a basis for an excellent story written by either author.

I. RENTAIN

75 East 93rd Street

New York City, N. Y.

[The theory of this magazine is to have science given in the stories. It is emphatically and precisely a literary magazine and the Discussions may be taken as a sort of Editorial Department. Many of the writers tell us what we ought to do. The saving clause is that the ideas of one writer differ widely from those of another. We leave the last paragraph of your letter to the authors named in it.—EDITOR.]

A Very Flattering Criticism and Appreciation of Stories

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I finally gave in to the long suppressed desire to write to you, so here goes.

I think that David H. Keller, E. E. Smith, John W. Campbell, Jr., Milton R. Peril, Stanton A. Coblentz, Charles R. Tanner and the incomparable team, I. M. Stephens and Fletcher Pratt have done most of the best stories you have published. Good stories by Keller were "Ivy War," "The Eternal Professors," "The Metal Doom," and "The Rat Racket," but his best story is "Life Everlasting." Each of his stories has either a brand new plot or a new and refreshing way of using an old one. Dr. E. E. Smith wrote three of the best stories I've ever read, namely, "Skylark Three," "Spacehounds of IPC" and "Triplanetary." Why haven't we had more of Campbell's stories lately. His Arcot, Morey and Wade stories equal even Dr. Smith's yarns. Also his other stories such as "Beyond the End of Space," "The Last Evolution," "Voice of the Void," "When the Atoms Failed" and "Battery of Hate" come up to the best stories I have ever read. Milton R. Peril has written only two, "The Dynasty of the Blue Black Rays" and "The Lost City," but both were excellent; all the more credit to him! Stanton Coblentz wrote excellent novels such as "The Sunken World," "After 12,000 Years," "Reclaimers of the Ice," "Blue Barbarians" and "The Man From To-Morrow," but his short stories such as "In the Footsteps of the Wasp," are the bunk! Not a single direct quotation! Just dull narration, almost like a history book! Get some more long stories by him. Both Charles R. Tanner's "Tumithak" stories were excellent. "Danger" and "A Voice Across the Years" were two superb stories by Stephens and Pratt. Other good stories by different authors were "The Stone from the Green Star" by Jack Williamson, "Purple Plague" by Tussell Hays, "Swordsmen of Sarvon" by Charles Cloukey, "The Metal Monster" by Kline, "Death from the Skies" by Verrill, "The Intelligence Gigantic" by Fearn, "The Prince of Liars," by Hansen, "The Drums of Tapajos" and "Troyana," by Meek and last but not least, all the Professor Jameson stories by Neil R. Jones.

I have noticed in the Discussions that every time a reader objects to reprinting stories by Poe and Verne, you say that they are certainly all classics. I am not denying that they are, but I will wager that for every one reader who

has not read them, or cannot obtain them out of the Public Library, there are at least fifty who have not read the stories such as "The Runaway Skyscraper" and "The Mad Planet" by Leinster, "Beyond the Pale" by Verrill, "The Man Higher Up" by Balmer and MacHarg and "The Moon Metal" by Serviss. These were all published in the early AMAZING STORIES and should be easy to obtain. Why not please the majority? Besides, these stories are of more interest to modern science fiction fans.

In the current August issue, I saw one extremely pleasant fact. There was not a single newcomer in the table of contents! Though some stories by newcomers are very good such as "Beam Transmission," most of them are mediocre. Even Bernard Brown whose "Prima Donna 1980" aroused so much unfavorable comment in 1931, surprised me in "Photo Control." "Shot Into Space" was very good. Joe Skidmore's "Velocity of Escape" made me think I was reading a "Dr. Bird" story by Captain S. P. Meek.

By this time the editor is surely in an apoplectic fit so I think I had better quit.

OLIVER SARRI

1342 First Street, S. E.

Rochester, Minn.

[We have published comparatively few short stories by Mr. Coblenz and we think you are rather hard upon him, but if he is given space he figures fairly and justly among the very best. It will be interesting to know how the authors take the criticisms, fortunately as a rule, favorable ones, which are printed in the Discussions columns. Your last paragraph is quite interesting. The issue has a certain value to us as showing that our old-time authors are still with us.—EDITOR.]

An Interesting Letter from Edward E. Smith, Ph.D.

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I did not expect to see my criticism of your editorial supervision appear in the September issue, as it was not intended for publication.

Since the letter is in print, however, I can only apologize publicly to Mr. Walsh and Mr. Burt—not for the sense of my note, but for its wording. I agree thoroughly with Mr. Burt that it is poor technique for one author publicly and ruthlessly to attack another; excepting, of course, in such friendly bouts as Campbell and I have had from time to time. If that note had been intended for publication it would have been phrased in much more diplomatic language, and it would of course have carried detailed proofs. As it was, I was writing to you as one mathematician to another and no proofs were necessary. It is quite elementary that the orbit of Ados (my criticism of Mr. Walsh's story) is mathematically impossible—so elementary that I am not at all convinced that Mr. Burt's enlargement of the theme was necessary.

Mr. Burt is eminently correct in saying that

there are many things in celestial mechanics that do not appear on the surface. One of them is the velocity built up by a satellite body in approaching its primary, however feeble or intermittent the causative impulses may be. Due to the mutual gravitational forces between the two bodies, this factor becomes a quantity of such magnitude that in order to make any satellite take up a stable orbit nearer its primary, the applied retarding force must have a very large component directly *against* the orbital velocity of the satellite in question. Mr. Burt's detailed computations—which in themselves seem to me to negate the contentions in his seventh clause—do not take this factor into consideration at all. As a result of this neglect his force is applied radially (plus-or-minus two degrees) and is therefore, as I pointed out to you, approximately ninety degrees in error. This mistake, while not as elementary as the one concerning the orbit of Ados, should have been apparent to you: and I believe that it is now clear to Mr. Burt. How well I know how easy it is for an author to let something like a slip into a story—I never will forget the shock I got when a paleontologist wrote in to "Discussions" that a saber-tooth tiger never could have fought a dinosaur, and that Dr. Smith knew it as well as he did! For, having at least been exposed to paleontology, I did in fact know it—the incident registered as an anachronism only after the absurdity had been pointed out to me.

Now as to Mr. Burt's criticism of my own science. I have defended myself so often in these columns that any more repetitions would seem superfluous. He errs, however, in assuming that I am entirely ignorant of the work of the able men he enumerates. I cannot plead ignorance: I can only claim anew my right as a writer of science fiction to disregard any and all *hypotheses*, as distinguished from *facts*. If, as Mr. Burt would have us believe, the concepts which I have violated have been so thoroughly proven and tested that no possible development of science can alter or overthrow them: then, *and then only*, am I wrong and my stuff becomes impossible. However, I believe that Mr. Burt is as well informed as I am, concerning the degree of reliance to be placed upon deductions based upon extrapolations far beyond observational data.

Finally, as to inertialessness. This is probably the most nearly impossible conception that I have ever tackled, and I am surprised that Mr. Burt let me get away with it at all. Postulating its possibility, however, it seems clear that in the instant of restoration of inertia there would be an automatic, instantaneous, and effortless return to the exact velocity obtaining at the onset of the inertialess condition—any other phenomena would seem to be barred by the law of conservation of energy.

EDWARD E. SMITH,
Hillsdale, Michigan.

[It is always a pleasure to receive a letter

from Dr. Smith for "Discussions." Like all of his letters, this one speaks for itself. Taking the point of view of the story-teller, there was a strong temptation to put a satellite in hiding behind the moon. From the standpoint of romance it was perhaps too good an idea to succumb to hard facts and mathematics. There is a similar lapse from possibilities in one of the stories in this issue, but it is used to take care of the story.—EDITOR.]

An Encouraging Letter for the Editorial Staff EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

This is the second time that I am going to let off some comments on the A. S. Mag. I have read the mag. for over four years now, and have enjoyed the time spent in reading the stories. The first A. S. that I bought had "The Green Girl" by Jack Williamson in it and which I liked very, very much. By the way, what happened to him? I don't recall having read a story by him in some time. Another question, what has happened to Harl Vincent? Has the author of the Jameson stories got any more about the Professor and his adventures with the Zorians? I sure like the stories about the Professor. I just finished reading the stories in the August A. S. over two times and I think that the story "The Velocity of Escape" actually demands a sequel with more about the Falcon and Millstein. Some of the readers of the A. S. get my goat in saying that the A. S. is going to the dogs—or something—but I think it is improving with every issue. The A. S. is without a doubt the best Science Fiction that anyone can buy and I have read many. As to some people not liking the reprints of Jules Verne and Poe, I have read many stories by both authors and I always enjoy reading them again. "Life Everlasting," by David H. Keller, was very, very good in describing the human wants and desires. Another thing, I don't like that remark made by Farrell of Washington. If he has a library card, why doesn't he use it to take out a book on manners! Well, I guess I have nothing else to say except that two serials in each issue are enough. More power to you. I like your editorials in the front of the magazine immensely.

CHARLES L. LATSEAW,
170 North Avenue 22,
Los Angeles, Calif.

[Nothing has happened to our old-time authors. You will be pleased and surprised to see the next few issues. But the task of pleasing everyone is never completed, and such letters as the above assuage our troubles.—EDITOR.]

AMAZING STORIES the Same as Ever— A Good Word for the Magazine

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I read every issue of AMAZING STORIES from its start for a period of five and a half years. Then I stopped for no reason. The issue of August, 1934 was kindly given to me by an

acquaintance. He certainly did me a good turn.

AMAZING STORIES, while changed in many ways physically, was essentially the same publication. I do not like serials. I read both of them only because the magazine fortunately had the concluding installments. I rarely follow a serial except with bad humor.

The serial "Life Everlasting" had a good ending. I imagine the entire story was good, though perhaps it could not be completely classed as science-fiction.

In the story "The Velocity of Escape," I found several minor errors, although I did not read the story critically. The errors are as follows: Millstein intends to circle the globe in increasing radii so he can find the Falcon. This would be a good idea if space was a geometrical plane. It surely would be necessary to make at least a second series of concentric circles at right angles to the first series to cover all territory. The next incident contains another error in dimensions. In the duel between Millstein and the Falcon, there is mention of Millstein glancing about in four dimensions. Possibly the author made an accidental error. If not, I would like to hear his explanation. Millstein mentions that if the sun acquired brightness as that of certain stars, 200,000 times as large as the sun, all life on earth would instantly be burned to a crisp. He probably overlooked the fact that it would take several minutes (about nine I think) for the light to travel to earth. The oxygen is removed from earth by the aid of the cosmic rays. It is supposed to leave the earth and diffuse into space. The Falcon tells his men, that when all life is extinct on the earth, he will bring back the oxygen. I don't see how he could have done it. The story is so replete with science that it is not surprising that minor errors occurred.

I thought that "Shot Into Space" was very good. It was full of suspense. I wish to vote against the printing of stories of Verne and Wells.

I'd like to get letters from readers interested in corresponding about science and kindred subjects. I intend to continue reading AMAZING STORIES.

E. G. SPANNER,
100 Forsyth Street,
New York City, N. Y.

[We hope you will continue to be a reader of our magazine. We are receiving many stories by new authors for consideration, but you will observe that the old time authors do not desert us. A very pleasant feeling is inspired by this fact and by the friendly feeling expressed in so many letters. But some do scold us.—EDITOR.]

A Reader Writes from a "Lonely Spot" in Manitoba

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

Just read your August issue, and the Fall Quarterly. I've come to the conclusion that Stanton A. Coblentz is an excellent writer, to

say the least. "The Sunken World" was a very fine story. It reminded me of Edward Bellamy's book "Looking Backward." "The Malignant Entity" was another good story. I am intensely interested in stories of that type. "The Strange Alchemy of Professor Bjornsen" was another good story of the same type. Let's have more of Kline's work. I like the cover on the Quarterly. I think you should put a cover like that on the monthly. I like the receding title—it looks "Amazing."

At present I am living in a lonely spot in central Manitoba, and your magazine is always a welcome sight. I would appreciate letters from any reader of A. S. and will answer the same.

I like the size of the mag. and have nothing against the uneven edges, and like Morey's drawings.

DUDLEY BENESFORD,
Wadhope P. O.
Long Lake, Manitoba
Canada

[We feel that we have done a good thing in putting AMAZING STORIES in Canada. We know that many readers there are glad to be able to get it as readily as United States readers can. You will find the authors you have liked are still working for us, and stories by old favorite writers will continue to appear.—EDITOR.]

A Letter for Readers of Gyroscopic Tendencies

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

In the August issue of your magazine you printed a story called "Photo Control." The story does not seem bad, but when I read of his new type of brakes my hair rose on end. This part of the story, his method of using the gyroscope to gain a pressure on the ground, seems radically wrong. As I understand it, the action of a gyroscope is to resist a turn if held rigid in other directions or if free to turn in another direction sideways from the original force. However, you can take a gyroscope and move it in any direction, if you don't turn it, as easily as any other mass of the same relative size and weight. Thus a gyroscope that was held rigid in a car with regard to turning vertically would, if turned sideways, throw one end of the car up and the other down. But it would be impossible to make the same gyroscope push down both ends because to push one end down it must put the other up and to attach it to both ends would be to get nowhere. You could put one gyroscope in each end and possibly gain a little friction, but the car would be bent into a semicircle at the same time. If I am wrong, as I hope I am, please point out the mistake to me, because if you can show me a good way to get a pressure without adding weight, as the author does (?) I am going to reverse the process and make me a fortune with a wingless airplane.

EDMOND GOODIE,
Hiram, Ohio.

[The story you speak of has the merit of presenting a new idea, but your objections certainly operate to invalidate its correctness. The least (and most) we can say is that the mechanism that reduces almost completely the rolling of a 50,000 ton ship, and one that holds it accurately on its course are wonderful achievements.—EDITOR.]

The Opinions of a Sixteen-Year Boy Critic

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

It is with renewed hope indeed that a veteran reader of AMAZING STORIES returns to the fold.

For quite some time now the inconsistencies of both your magazine and my purse have contrived to declare a moratorium on my purchasing of AMAZING STORIES, however, hoping for the cessation of both of these hindrances, I am returning to AMAZING STORIES—for more than a temporary stay I hope.

Regarding your magazine I should say that some time ago it was in grave danger of becoming, nay it had already become a haven of refuge for every sort of trash imaginable. After perusing the August 1934 issue, I find that danger still present, though to somewhat lessened degree.

Fond memories of the now-departed AMAZING STORIES, I must bid farewell to—no more shall I thrill at the sight of any issue of AMAZING STORIES, whose contents would gladden the heart of any reader, true science fiction with a pronounced emphasis upon the "science."

Mind now, I am not one of those science bugs who are awaiting the appearance of AMAZING STORIES as a science text-book, but I do not at all enjoy stories with not one whit of intelligence behind them—sadistic tales created by some third rate "pen-pushers" (I would not even do them the honor of addressing them as authors or as writers), yet at least fifty percent of the stories contained in AMAZING STORIES magazine may be classed in this category. You have some exceedingly fine writers—Coblentz, Breuer, Kostkos, Keller for example. Make use of them consistently, refuse to accept the sophomoric tales which you have been publishing, and I am sure that your circulation will increase one hundred fold.

Please pardon the ramblings of a sixteen-year old, though you may well rest assured that they are written in the spirit of friendly cooperation, and a willing desire to help, rather than through any desire to heckle or to criticize the Editors who, I am sure, are doing all in their power to provide us readers with a constantly improving AMAZING STORIES.

The best of luck to you!

P. S.—I should greatly appreciate hearing from any intelligent readers of AMAZING STORIES.

DAVID M. LIEBERMAN
1777—East 8th Street,
Brooklyn, New York.

[For some mysterious reason the sixteenth year of a boy's life seems to excite him to severe lines of judgment. Your desire to help

us indicates a friendly spirit. But we are afraid that your assistance might be rather limited in results. Wait for a few years and you will take a different view of things.—EDITOR.]

A Letter to Please the Editor and to Make a Happy Author Blush

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I have just concluded the absorbing interplanetary story, "The Velocity of Escape." This tale is one of the finest works of Joe W. Skidmore ever published. It has all the particulars a science fiction fan can ask for. I beg of you to please print a sequel to this truly Amazing yet easily understood story. Success is yours if you keep hoisting aloft your magazine with more such superb tales.

LEONARD ISRAEL
169-10 35th Avenue
Flushing, N. Y.

[The general feeling inspired by our most recent correspondents is that the magazine is as good or better than ever. You will not be disappointed in the issues in the near (or distant) future.—EDITOR.]

Criticisms and Appreciations of a Number of Stories

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I have been reading your stories for the last three years, and I find that most of them are pretty good.

In the June issue I found that "The Lost City" was very good. I didn't like "Measuring a Meridian" at all. "Hastings—1066" was pretty good, but nothing extra. "Peace Weapons" was great and I would like to have more like it.

In the July issue "Life Everlasting" is going to hold my attention. "Beam Transmission" and "The Four Dimensional Auto-Parker" were pretty good, but "Roadside Strategy" wasn't.

I like the short articles in your magazine very much.

"Photo Control" and "The Velocity of Escape" were good stories, but "Footsteps of the Wasp" were terrible. "The Master Minds of Venus" was just the type of story that I like.

I would also like some young person my age to write to me. I am 16.

GEORGE G. WYCHE
804 East First Street
Alice, Texas.

[It would be quite amusing to publish a collection of comments on our stories by correspondents under the mystical age of 16. Such are never afraid to speak out their minds and this letter which falls under such classification is unusually good natured.—EDITOR.]

A Collection of Science Fiction Magazines

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I wonder whether any of your readers can

challenge my contention of being the world's largest individual owner of science fiction magazines.

I am the proud possessor of about 1,700 copies of AMAZING, Wonder, Astounding, Weird Tales, etc., which I have been collecting for years as I think they will have quite some value in time.

LEON POIS,
2101 Grand Concourse,
New York City, N. Y.

[We publish your interesting note for the benefit of our readers to let them know how much interest is taken in science fiction by some of our friends.—EDITOR.]

An Encouraging Letter with One Story Condemned

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

Would you please print this letter in "Discussions" of AMAZING STORIES?

I would like to get a hold of "AMAZING STORIES, Volume I, Number I and the AMAZING STORIES Annual. If any one, who has either or both of these magazines in good condition, with covers intact also, wishes to sell or trade them, please communicate with me. I will accept the best offers that I get.

In regard to your serials, I think that "Terror Out of Space" by H. H. Hill was better than "Triplanetary" by Dr. E. E. Smith. "The Lost City," by M. R. Peril was excellent. "Life Everlasting," by Dr. Keller is starting out wonderfully.

"Beam Transmission," by G. H. Scheer, Jr., is the best short story you have published for months, at least that is my opinion.

The only thing "Amazing" about "Roadside Strategy" by Charlie Mills is the fact that you published it—for your reader's sake don't let too many stories of this type gain access to your magazine.

I hope the new Fall, 1934, AMAZING STORIES Quarterly is as good as the Winter, 1933, issue.

KENNETH HARRISON,
72 Laurel Street,
Ashland, Oregon.

[If you glance through the Discussions, you will find in every number that some correspondent announces that he has back issues for sale. You might also drop a line to our Circulation Department.—EDITOR.]

Back Numbers of AMAZING STORIES

EDITOR, AMAZING STORIES:

I have been a reader of AMAZING STORIES for some time and have collected a number of issues. Anyone desiring any old numbers can obtain them from me.

HARRY THORN,
7415—87th Avenue
Woodhaven, N. Y.

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Sexual Sterility
Glory and Sex Instinct
To Gain Greater Delight
The Truth About Abuse

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW

Face of Perfect Matrimony
What to Allow a Lover
to do
Indicate Feminine Hygiene
Prostitution
Birth Control Chart

How to Attract and Hold
Men
Sexual Slavery of Women
Essentials of Happy
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